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ICE BOUND In The South Polar Seas



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ICE BOUND

In the South Polar Seas



— *From Book of Maxims* —

GOOD DEEDS RING THROUGH HEAVEN
LIKE A BELL

ICE BOUND



In The South Polar Seas by

ROY JUDSON SNELL

The Explorer Author
Author of

SKIMMER THE DARING IN THE FAR NORTH,
SKIMMER AND HIS THRILLING ADVENTURES,
and LITTLE BOY FRANCE

Illustrated by
OLIVE LOFTS

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FOREWORD

Nothing, of any real value, as far as the author is aware of (and he has had rather unusual opportunities for coming into intimate contact with boys' books), has ever been written for boys about the Antarctic regions. Yet no field is more interesting nor more fascinating; especially since such men as Scott, Amundsen and Shackelton have established the fact that the South Pole rests upon a vast continent. An imaginary visit to this unknown continent has, to the writer, the fascination of a trip to the moon with all the danger of being entirely wrong about how the thing really is, left out. This story is based on my own year spent on the shore of Polar seas, and upon the records of the best of Antarctic explorers from Charcot to Shackelton.

The Author.



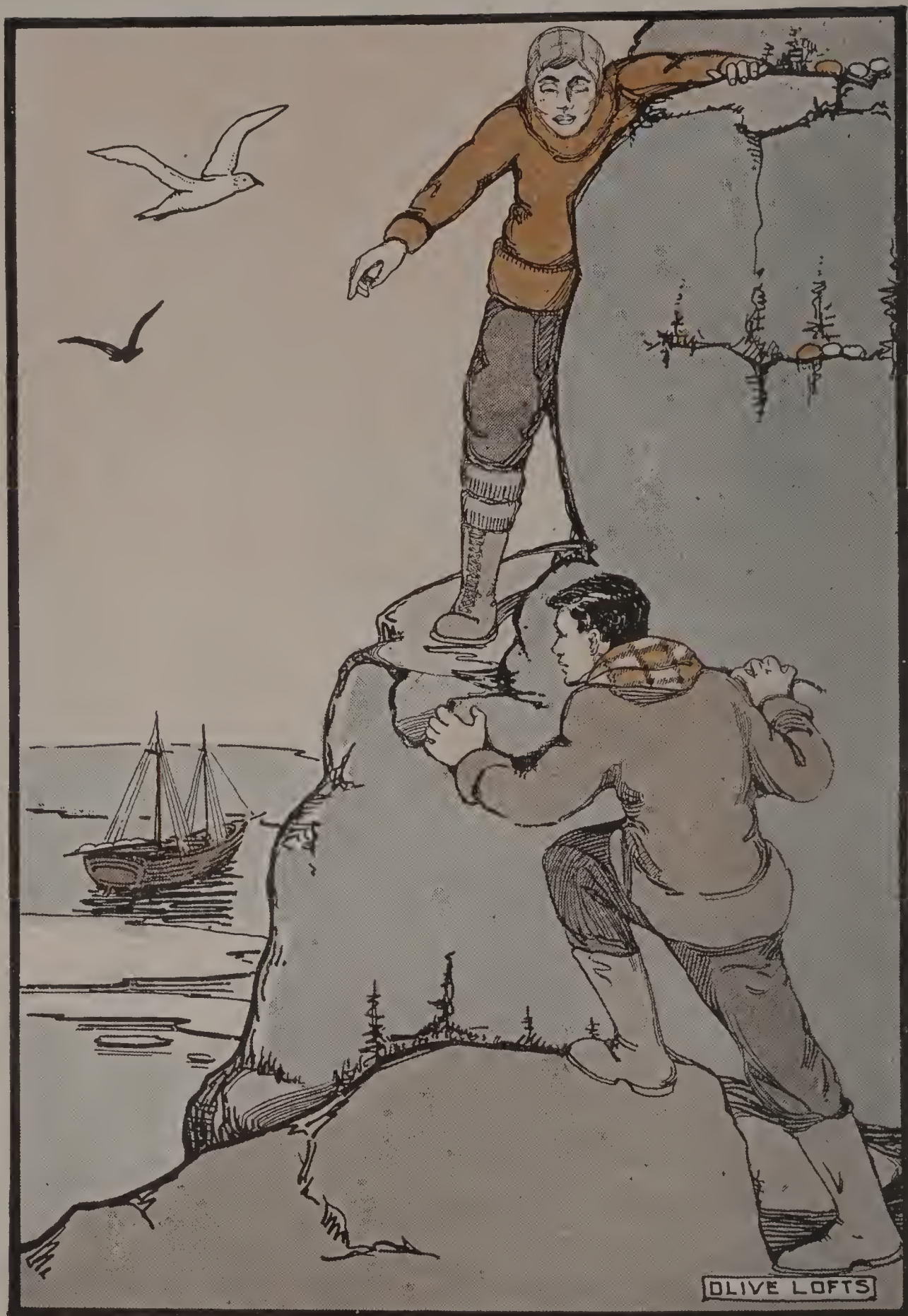
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Was a Small Gasoline Schooner

ICE BOUND IN THE SOUTH POLAR SEAS

CHAPTER I

Antarctic Gold



WELL you boys are really going to Deception Island?" The old sailor gazed away at the sea with an expression that told plainer than words that he wished that he, too, were sailing for some distant port.

"I've been there," he said at last, turning again to the boys. "Went down

there on a sealer for the Antarctic. Fur-seal we went after, and we found them, too! You never heard of fur-seals in the Antarctic, did you? Well, there was, in those days. There was a time when a schooner could bring away ten thousand skins in a summer's hunting. That was a little before my time, but we took plenty of them; enough, anyway, to make the old captain rich." The aged man sat in dreamy recollection of those other days, then, as if suddenly reminded of something, he sprang from his chair and hobbled away to his cabin.

The old sailor had been an especially good friend of the two boys, Rodger Brock and Don Ferin, who were about

to take a trip to Deception Island, which lies some hundreds of miles south of Cape Horn in the Antarctic Ocean. They were at present in the port of Punta Ayres. This was, at present, their home. Their fathers had become interested in a whaling enterprise and had moved here from New England. From boyhood the boys had all but lived upon the sea. At the present time they owned a small gasoline schooner named the Augusta C. With the help of a stalwart Norwegian boy, Ole Jensen, they did a small business of freighting along the coast. They had just that day received a wireless from Don's father, ordering them to take on a cargo of supplies for the whaling

station on Deception Island and to proceed south with them at once.

The boys were thinking of this and wishing that the old riches of the Antarctic were still at their disposal, when the aged sailor came tottering back. In his hand he held a carefully wrapped package.

“I found this down there in the Antarctic, South Shetland Islands, at the head of a little inland sea. Pendulum Cove they used to call the little point of water; just above that in the sand.”

The boys watched the unwrapping of the package with eager curiosity, expecting to see some strange fossil or some unknown species of mollusk shells. But when at last the covering

came off and they beheld what had long been wrapped there, their eyes opened wide in astonishment. Before them lay six gold nuggets!

“You don’t mean,” stammered Don, “you don’t mean that you found them in the Antarctic?”

The old man nodded, evidently pleased at the boy’s astonishment.

“And you never went back?” exclaimed Rodger.

“My boy,” said the old man, smiling, “a sailor never goes back on a long cruise if there’s anywhere else to go. I went north next, and all but forgot this gold I found there in Pendulum Cove. But by and by a comrade of mine was shipping for the South Seas

and I told him about it. When he came back he said that Pendulum Cove had disappeared. And so I suppose it had, for the island seemed volcanic. There were hot water springs everywhere, and in some places there were sulphur fumes coming from cracks in the rocks. So that is all I ever thought about it till now. And if the Cove's gone, it wouldn't do any good to go back, anyway." The old man carefully wrapped his gold nuggets round and round once more, then went tottering into his shack, leaving the boys to their own thoughts.

"I think," Rodger exclaimed at last, "that Pendulum Cove looks good to me!"

“I’d rather like to get a look at it myself,” admitted Don. “But, of course, if that Pendulum Cove has disappeared, I don’t suppose there’d be any chance of finding—”

“Finding tame tigers or trick elephants, or anything like that down there,” laughed Rodger.

But in spite of their gayety the boys were bitten by the gold-bug in a more serious manner than they were willing to admit, and before they finally pointed the prow of the little schooner to the southward, they had many a private conference with the veteran seaman. The result was they carried away with them some very crudely drawn maps, which were after all,

pretty fair charts of the South Shetland Islands and the Antarctic Seas.

It was some time later that the boys found themselves in the region of the South Shetland Islands, eagerly scanning the horizon for a first glimpse of land. A storm was coming up out of the east. With their schooner heavily laden and with ample time for completing their journey to Deception Island, they decided, if possible, to seek shelter.

“Land to the starboard bow!” exclaimed Don who was on the lookout. As they strained their eyes they could make out some snowy peaks rising out of the sea.

On nearing the island they found the

sea to the south of it blocked with ice-floes.

“Might as well put in at some cove,” said Ole Jensen, scanning the shore with his glass. “Looks like a chance to pull in there at starboard. Once we get in there perhaps we can go ashore for fresh water and a bit of exercise.”

“Might get some penguin meat, too,” said Rodger.



CHAPTER II

An Adventure with Penguin Poachers

By a careful maneuvering of the schooner among the shoals they succeeded in reaching the island. Having anchored their schooner in a little natural harbor, which was free from ice, they went ashore to explore this strange land, which had so seldom been visited by man.

“Schooner won’t need much watch-

ing,” smiled Don. “I don’t believe there’s a man within a few hundred miles of us, to say the least.”

“Guess not,” answered Rodger.

Just then they spied some dark object moving along the horizon and knew it to be a penguin—one of those queer, manlike birds that haunt Antarctic lands.

Knowing that this meant fresh meat for supper, and a replenishing of their larder, if they caught him, they were away at once in wild pursuit.

They were returning later, each with two giant birds thrown over his shoulder, when Rodger suddenly stopped and listened.

“What’s that pop-popping sound?”

Why it's a schooner! It's our schooner!" he exclaimed all in a breath.

The three boys stood amazed for a moment, while they saw the mast of their schooner slowly move out to sea.

"Come on!" called Ole, starting forward.

But Don called him back. "You forget," he said, "that we are only three boys, for the moment alone in this empty land. Those are probably desperately rough men who have come some way overland to this point. We can gain nothing by exposing ourselves. So long as we are not in sight, they can have no means of knowing how many there are of us."

“But,” Ole said, more soberly, “what can we do?”

That, indeed, was the question. Creeping up to a place where they could see their schooner through a crevice in the rock, the boys saw a vicious looking man at the helm, and another at the engine, as their schooner slowly disappeared around the point out of the harbor, they asked themselves very solemnly, “What can we do?”

They were here on an island close to the Antarctic Circle, without shelter and with only one day’s supply of food, save for the meat and eggs which they might secure from the penguin rookeries. If these men should succeed in

escaping from the island with their schooner, nothing would remain for the boys but death from exposure and starvation.

“Boys,” exclaimed Ole, at last, “those men came to the schooner by land. There are no people living on this island, we know that. They must have come to the island in some way. We must back-track them and find out how they came here!”

They set out at once. The schooner was now quite out of sight, around a rocky point, so they felt safe in following the tracks which led over a low stretch of land, then across a little ridge, to the main coast line of the island. As they reached the ridge,

Rodger gave a cry of surprise. There in a little cove was a small gasoline schooner. There was no sign of life upon it. It seemed to have been abandoned.

“I wonder if they are coming back for it? We must take possession of it!” exclaimed Don, racing forward and dragging his companion after him.

A little dory was on the beach. The schooner was anchored with ice-anchors to a flat ice-pan not far from the shore. The boys were soon aboard her.

Don rushed to the engine-room and gave the wheel a quick, strong turn. There was a faint explosion, then the engine died.

“I thought that was it!” he exclaimed,

throwing his jacket on deck and rolling up his sleeves. "They have had engine trouble, and to make sure of leaving the Antarctic, they have stolen our schooner. Now can I get their old boat going in time to dodge them?"

To reach this schooner the men would have to pass around a point of land. This would consume an hour's time. Already they had been on their way a half-hour.

Anxiously Rodger scanned the point of land, while successive bangs and loud pop-pops came from the engine room. One thing reassured him; the storm which had threatened, had passed around the island. This they would

not be obliged to fight. In the interval, he had time to realize that the schooner was terribly dirty. The air was rank with the smell of putrid penguin oil and waste. Supposing they did succeed in escaping with this schooner, how would they fare after that? But he had little inclination to consider that question. Any schooner was far better than no schooner at all in these Antarctic Seas.

But just as he had dismissed these thoughts, the mast of their own schooner appeared over the point of land. Soon they would be in full view of the ruffians.

“What wretched villians they must

be!” murmured Rodger. “They did not mean to leave us a way of escape from the island!”

Don, his clothing and hands grimy with the grease, listened for an instant to the distant popping of the engine in the stolen schooner. Evidently it was not working well. With a little burst of hope, he bent once more to his task, still listening for the sounds from the other schooner. There came a succession of sharp bangs; then all was silent. The other engine was dead!

Realizing now that it was to be a race of mechanical skill with the handicap decidedly against him, so far as the work needed was concerned, Don redoubled his energies, while the per-

spiration poured from his face. With one ear he still heard the unsuccessful attempt of the bandits to start their engine.

The boys determined to get the abandoned engine into perfect condition before turning the wheel. If they only could get a little start of the pirates they felt sure they could out-sail them. Don had absolute confidence in his ability to keep the engine going, once it was in repair.

But in a moment's time all was changed. Glancing up, Don saw something that made his blood chill. On the shore, nearer to the men than to them, lay a great glacier. Its protruding giant finger of ice seemed held in

place by a great iron clamp of rocks. But at the inner end of this finger there had appeared a narrow crack. And even as he gazed, fascinated by this natural phenomenon, there came an ominous boom from the great mass which was about to give way.

“Boys, quick! Into the forecastle and close the hatch!” Gripping the rail of the engine room, Don continued to gaze at the glacier. There came a boom like the report of a cannon, and with a mighty grinding swash, the glacier’s end gave way and sank into the dark waters. Instantly there was a sound as of a tidal wave rushing toward the boat. In the nick of time, Don slammed

down the hatch. In another moment the schooner pitched as if in the clutches of a tornado. Great fragments of ice shot into the air and splashed down beside the schooner. One of them could have crushed the boat like an egg shell. Great boulders were torn from the bank beneath the glacier and hurled seaward, while the wash of the semi-tidal waves continued to rock the schooner, as if it had been a cork in a wash-basin.

Little by little the waves subsided. Don, as he poked his head out, looked eagerly in the direction of the stolen schooner. He expected to see merely a mass of broken boards and timbers,

or at least a schooner capsized; but instead the staunch little boat was still rocking in the water.

But where were the men? He looked long for them, and at last spied one of them crawling upon a flat cake of ice, with the other swimming not far behind. Evidently they had been too intent upon starting the engine to catch the warning note of the glacier. A little to the right of the men the great new iceberg stood against the sky as serenely as if it had always been a part of the sea.

Don gave one quick glance at his magneto. The other boys, with white faces, crept up from the forecastle. The magneto was dry. The engine re-



Crawling upon a flat cake of ice

sponded to the master touch like some live thing, glad to be released from its bonds. Heading the schooner for their own, which was now unmanned and drifting, they soon reached it and went aboard, examining the engine which had refused to respond to the touch of the robbers.

While Don was attending to this the other boys again stood on deck enjoying to the full the surprised look on the faces of the men, as they realized that they had been outwitted by mere boys.

The engine was soon in order and they were face to face with the problem of the next move.

“We can’t leave them to freeze and

starve,” said Don, “though it is perfectly evident that this is just what they intended doing to us. We’ll have to give them back their schooner, I guess, but we’ll take all their fire-arms with us and that’ll give them an excuse to leave these waters quickly which is about what we want of them. They’re penguin poachers; that’s what they are and no good for any one.”

The plan was quickly carried out. After removing the rifles from the renegade schooner, they allowed it to drift towards the ice-cake till they were sure it could be reached by its owners. Then they set their engine going and went pop-popping around the point.

CHAPTER III

Shanghaied, Schooner and All

This little adventure made them more cautious in their manner of handling their affairs. Evidently, there was not a spot on the earth's surface where they could be safe from pirates and vandals.

Leaving Ole to watch the schooner, Don and Rodger returned alone over the frozen hills to regain the birds they had killed for their supper.

Having returned to the schooner, Rodger watched the antics of some of the penguins on shore, while Ole prepared a toothsome meal of meat that certainly was strange to both of them, and Don gave his engine a thorough overhauling.

“Tired?” asked Rodger after the meal was finished.

“No,” grinned Ole. Don shook his head.

“Then we’ll try to get round this island. I’m all for getting this freight delivered. Then we may have time for a look in at Pendulum Cove and a search for our old friend’s mine.”

Soon the engine was popping while they nosed their way cautiously round

the island. Once the island was passed, they found themselves in a wide open sea. They traveled for six hours, then, the sea being calm, they all turned in to sleep.

They had slept for some time when Don was awakened by a succession of bumps on the side of the schooner. What could it mean? When they had turned in there had not been a cake of ice in sight.

He rubbed his eyes and sat up in his bunk. The bumping had ceased, but he thought he heard steps on the deck above. Hurriedly kicking himself out of his blankets, he started toward the hatch. He was met by the

gaze of four pair of eyes gleaming out from rough, unshaven faces.

“Come out ’o there!” commanded one of the men threateningly. He spoke with a Spanish accent.

Don still blinked unable to understand the situation.

“Come on! Shake on your boots and kick out your partners!” exclaimed the spokesman more savagely. “We’ve been looking for you!”

He caught the gleam of a revolver. It was evident that these were desperate men and it was wise to obey. He shook his companions into wakefulness and tried to explain the situation. Ole was for a fight at once, but when he

realized that they were outnumbered two to one by armed men, he accepted his companion's counsel and came on deck ready to receive orders from this strange gang of ruffians.

As they reached the deck Don caught his breath. Away a little at a distance lay a great black hull, a steamer. What was this, a buccaneer in these wild seas? Surely the days for such things were past. Still, they were being taken from their schooner apparently without reason. In vain he tried to reason with the men. They had nothing to reply save, "Captain's orders! Captain's orders!" and that was as far as they would go toward an explanation. As soon as the boys were on board the

black steamer, there was a ringing of bells and the steamer was run alongside the gasoline schooner. A hoist was lifted, a great beam swung out over the sea, and in another moment the gasoline schooner was swinging between the sea and sky.

“They’re going to take our schooner on board!” exclaimed Don.

It was quite true, for soon the schooner shot in over the stern of the steamer and was lowered to the deck.

“What kind of high piracy is this, anyway?” exclaimed Don, thoroughly enraged.

“Steady there, lad!” whispered a friendly Spanish sailor, “Men have been put in chains for less than that.”

The boy was silent. He realized that there was little use of talking. The thing to do was to be silent and await developments. Every mystery has its solution and most often it is found by observation. They were in Antarctic seas, many miles from an inhabited port. The captain of this ship doubtless had some reason for shanghaiing them, or thought he did. They could better clear the matter up when they knew under what supposition the captain was laboring.

“Send ’em forward.” said the mate, who was in command. “There’ll be work for them in the morning.” Rodger thought he detected a malicious grin on the man’s face. “They’ll

be needin' all the rest they can get," he finished, as the boys were led to a foul-smelling bunk room where three sailors were snoring heavily.

Ole, with the hardihood of his race, was soon snoring as lustily as the sailors, Rodger, too, slept, but Don could not sleep. His mind went over and over the possible motives for the actions of this steamer captain. Had they been accused of some crime by the Chilean Government? Was this indeed, a roving renegade steamer? Had war been declared between the United States and Chile? All these solutions and many others presented themselves to his mind; but none of them seemed at all possible. But for

that matter, it did not seem at all possible that they could be shanghaied by a steamer. So if these were possible, any solution of the mystery seemed equally possible. At last, in utter exhaustion, he fell into a troubled sleep.

In the morning, after a brief conference, the boys determined that they would go to the captain and demand an explanation. But all efforts to carry this plan through were thwarted. They were guided about about by two husky seamen. They were treated to a breakfast of pea soup, which smelled suggestively of seal oil. After this they were led down, down,

down to the very bowels of the ship where swarthy natives were shoveling coal into the gaping, flaring mouths of the boilers. They were shown shovels and told to go to work.

“They’re going to set us stoking,” groaned Don, as he loosened the collar of his shirt and took up his shovel.

Four hours later they were allowed to return to the air. They were faint from the flaring heat of the fires and grimy with coal soot.

“Whew! I can’t stand much of that,” panted Roger as they reached the open air. “And if we strike a storm it will kill me,” he added desperately, “we’ll have to do something soon!”

As they made their way forward, he heard a snap-snap, like the singing of a giant locust. Looking up his eyes brightened.

“They’ve got a wireless!” he whispered.

“What good’ll that do us?” asked Don indifferently.

“I’ll get a message off if I have to send it myself in the middle of the night and if they make me walk the plank for it,” whispered Rodger, striking the rail with his fist as he spoke.

“Rodger, is the captain of this ship a madman, and are the crew afraid to refuse to disobey him?” Don groaned on the third day of their captivity, as they emerged from the hold to rest them-

selves from their life-destroying task at the fires.

“If he’s a madman, he doesn’t walk much like one,” said Rodger. “There he goes now.” True enough, a tall dignified figure was just now rounding a corner to his state-room. Don sprang forward to intercept him, but a strong arm was thrust out to meet him. It was the arm of the second mate. Every time they had attempted to get in communication with the captain it had been the same.

Fortune had favored them in some ways. They had not run into any storms as yet, and the ship was not moving far in a day. That the vessel was engaged in the whaling industry was

confirmed by a report of a small cannon from the stern and the subsequent taking of a whale in tow.

“He must be insane!” exclaimed Don in exasperation. “Think of picking up a ship flying the stars and stripes and compelling her crew to do stoker’s duty in the hold of a whale ship.”

“That’s just where you make a mistake,” said Rodger despondently. “We weren’t flying any flag at the time they took us in. Don’t you remember our flag was torn from the mast by a gale and we had none to replace it?”

Don uttered a low groan as he realized the truth of his companion’s words.

“I’ll get a message off yet!” Rodger said firmly, as he bit his lip. Every

moment on deck, especially during the night, he had watched for an opportunity to slip into the wireless operating room and send a message, a call for help across the waters. But when the operator was away the door was always locked. He had attempted to make friends with the wireless operator, who did not understand English, but to no avail. There remained but one hope that the apparatus should be left unguarded for a short time. A brief message flashed to the United States Consul at Punta Ayres would do wonders for them. But would the opportunity ever come?

It was in the evening of the third day that Rodger, seemingly leaning

idly against the yard-arm, in reality keeping one eye on the wireless cabin, saw the operator come from the room with a preoccupied air and without locking the door, walk toward the Captain's cabin. The boy's heart beat wildly. Here was his opportunity. For once, the ever-watchful second mate was not in sight. With a dash he cleared the gang-way and in another instant his finger was on the key. "Clack! Clack! Clack-clack-clack!" rang out the strange voice of the wireless across the sea; a short, terse message to the consul at Punta Ayres asking for help.

It was all over in an instant and he

had just scooted to a dark corner behind some life-boats when the wireless operator came tearing back to his cabin, his face white as a sheet. Entering the room he seemed surprised to find no one there. Mopping his brow he examined the instruments closely, and even flashed a brief meaningless message out to sea. Finding everything in order he seemed more composed. Evidently he had not been with the captain at the time the message rang out, and he settled down at last as if willing to ignore the incident rather than face the serious charges of neglect.

“Well, that was easier than I could hope it might be!” sighed the young

amateur, as he joined his companion. "If only the Consul gets our message we'll be all right."

But as he said these words the boy suddenly realized that they were several hundred miles from Punta Ayres, and after the Consul had persuaded the easy-going authorities of the Chilean Government to take action, it would be necessary for a cutter to come all that distance to demand their release. That all might take a month, and if a storm should arise he was sure he never could live through it in the hold shoveling coal.

But even as he was thinking of this, the wireless again rang out over the waters. The operator was flashing a

reply to some message which he had just received. He listened with all his ears as he caught the drift of the message. It was regarding them, and said something about robbers of penguin rookeries and cormorant nesting places. Rodger began to understand. But who could this be who was wiring in regard to them?

They were soon to know. In ten minutes the wireless operator hastened to the Captain's cabin and a few seconds after that the second mate came for the boys.

"Captain wants to see you!" he said in Spanish.

The boys were soon looking into the keen eyes of a Spaniard. He was evi-

dently a man of intelligence and strength of character.

“It seems,” he said in very good English, “that I have made a very grave mistake. For this mistake you were partly to blame in not flying your nation’s flag. But that does not make amends for the indignity, I have brought upon you. I was rash. But we have been greatly exasperated by the pillagers of the penguin rookeries. I took you to be some of these despoilers. You will understand that the seamen of the Antarctic in a way depend for their lives upon the penguin. If a whaling boat or a steamer is wrecked on this frozen coast the men may sub-

sist for a long time on penguin meat and eggs. But if the penguin are gone there is no hope for them. Men have been running in here during the summer and slaughtering these helpless creatures by thousands in cruel pastime, and carrying away only such as they may take a fancy to. You will understand how easy it was for us to believe you to be one of these parties. You will also understand how desirable it would be to teach you a lesson if you were the guilty ones. Indeed, we had permission from our Government to punish you. But now in answer to a message, doubtless sent by one of you, a fellow whaler tells me that he saw

you leave Punta Ayres, and assures me I have made a grave mistake. Young gentlemen, I am at your mercy."

The boys retired for consultation. When they returned they assured the Captain that they would not prosecute him. They only asked to be set back in the water in their own schooner, with fresh clothing to replace that which had been ruined in the hold.

The gratitude of the Captain was unbounded at this clemency. He gave them new clothing, the best of food the ship could afford, and filled their gasoline tank with gas for further journeys.

In the days that followed, they learned that these two rather startling

experiences with men who haunt the forbidding waters of Polar Seas, were the exception rather than the rule. The penguin-poachers, and the South American whaler had happened upon them, much as one's eye happens upon a four-leafed clover. For days on end, they saw no one. At times a fog closed down upon them. Then they crept forward slowly, expecting at any instant to crash into an ice-pan or berg.



CHAPTER IV

Trapped on the Unexplored Continent

“Don! Don! Come on! Get out of here!”

Don, in an aftercabin berth of the *Augusta C.*, stirred sleepily.

Rodger, who had just called to him in excited and insistent tones, now came tumbling down the hatch to seize his shoulders and shake him vigorously.

“Don—Don! Come. Boat’s going to

bust. Come, get out of here quick!"

Only complete exhaustion could cause a boy to sleep at the present moment as Don had been sleeping. Thirty hours of ceaseless watching had sent him to his berth at last, groggy with sleep. Nothing short of that could have driven the tremendous din about the ship from his ears. Such a creaking and groaning, such a grinding and crashing, such a booming and bursting as had never before been heard outside a battlefield had been going on around the staunch little schooner for hours. The Augusta C. was caught fast in a gigantic Antarctic ice-floe; had been for three days. For three days they had been carried, helpless in the grip of this floe south-

ward, ever southward toward the Pole. And to what? They could not even guess. Somewhere ahead in the course of the floe was a vast unexplored continent; a continent perhaps as large as North or South America. The future of the schooner and her young owners had been totally unknown.

And now, as Rodger had said, the end had come.

“Hear that!” he whispered as Don sat groggily up in his bunk. “It’s the end of her, I tell you. Come out of here.”

As the two boys stumbled up the hatch the boat gave an almost human groan of agony. Then came the crash

and shudder of breaking hull and snapping braces.

The craft shot upward and outward. Like some steel cylinder slipping from the grip of a vice it leaped from the icy jaws that had held it and went crashing over.

And there it lay, a crushed and broken thing in the very center of a wilderness of ice.

With difficulty the two boys clung to the upper rail, to at last lower themselves to the surface of the ice.

There they were joined by a third person—Ole.

“Well, I think that’s the finish,” said Ole, removing his cap and scratching his head.

“Yes, Ole, I guess that’s the end,” Don mumbled. There was a choke in his voice. “She was a good little schooner. But then they say, the end of one thing is always the beginning of another. Perhaps this is a beginning and not an end.”

Had Don realized to what a strange and thrilling chain of adventures this was the first link, he would certainly have had occasion to pause in fear. As it was, he was all for action, and action *was* imperative.

“Got to get her up into the mildle of this large flat pan right away,” was his terse comment. “Floe must have struck land somewhere ahead of us in the snow-fog. That’s what made it

buckle up and smash our boat. It's piling. See that cake over there. Six feet through and forty feet wide. Up she goes. There she breaks and crumbles. If one or two like that pile on top of our schooner, we'd never dig out as much as one square meal from our supplies. Starve right on the spot."

"Capstan's all right," suggested Ole Jensen, the big Norwegian. "Hang the anchor over the edge. Hook the cable to her. Wind up the capstan. I think that would be all right."

"Good idea!" exclaimed Rodger. "Let's get to it."

Ten minutes later, urged on by every turn of the capstan, which though lying on its side, still did yeoman duty,

the schooner was being dragged about, stern first, across the broad. flat cake of ice.

In the center of this ice-pan for the time being she was safe from the ice which was now piling higher and higher, one cake upon another in wild confusion.

We ought to be finding out where we are," said Rodger after a moment's rest from turning the capstan. "There's land ahead all right but the snow fog's hid it. We ought to know how far away it is and what sort of land. Might be a perpendicular wall of red granite or the end of a glacier or there might be a beach. We may have to leave the ice; surely will have to sooner or later.

Can't stay out here always. Can't get away now before spring even if the schooner can be fixed up. We're in a box all right; but it might be worse."

"Tell you what," he said after a moment's thought, "you fellows can watch things here all right; see that the boat gets moved if there's any chance of her being crushed. I'd take some of the supplies and the blankets out of the fore-cabin so you can move them quickly in case worst comes to worst. And while you're doing that, I'll try to get across that tumbling pile of floes and see what land it is."

"You'll get lost," grumbled Don.

"No, I won't," said Rodger cheerfully. "I've my compass, I'll chart my

course carefully. I'll be back, never fear."

"All right, good-bye and good luck," smiled Don as he turned his weary brains to plans for removing supplies from the ill-fated schooner.

Rodger was soon leaping from ice pile to ice pile, racing across broad stretches of flat ice or climbing some crumbling pile of broken ice fragments. His mind too was busy trying to picture the shore he was approaching. Now he saw within his mind's eye a towering wall of rock and now a pebbly beach inhabited by hundreds of chattering penguins and now felt the chill winds which swept from the endless ice fields of some gigantic glacier,

but even as he dreamed he sped on toward his goal.

As for Don, he was soon engaged, along with Ole, in the task of carrying heavy cases of canned goods, sacks of flour, sugar, ham, bacon and dried fruits, together with scores of other cartons and packages of various dimensions down a tippy gang plank, to stock them in piles on the surface of the ice.

The monotony of the task gave him time to think of the past and, almost mechanically, his mind went over the events which led up to this, the most dramatic and thrilling moment of his career.

The days of travel over calm seas following their release from the whaler

had brought them to a point where they must surely have been able to see the rocky shores of Deception island had not a heavy fog settled down over the sea.

It was at this point that they found themselves approaching a broad stretch of ice-floes which completely blocked their way. This floe was not composed of dangerous icebergs but of thousands of cakes and ice-pans, six feet in thickness and varying in width from ten to five hundred feet.

Rodger had given orders to skirt the floe and attempt to pass around it. This course was followed for twelve hours. The floe had seemed endless. The fog had lifted. They had been able to see,

across the floe, the cliffs of the island. Every moment of their course was carrying them away from the island. There was little time for reaching the island, unloading, and getting back to the mainland before the annual freeze-up, let alone making their coveted visit to the treasure island of Pendulum Cove.

“Looks like a channel straight across the floe over there to the right,” Don had suggested.

“Let’s try it,” Rodger had said, giving the wheel a twirl.

“I think that will be dangerous,” had been Ole’s comment.

But try it they had. Half way through the floe, they had found them-

selves suddenly closed in upon by broad, immovable ice-pans. They had been trapped by the floe as many another vessel has been in the past.

For some time they had hopes of poling themselves out but at last had realized that the floe was riding one of those mysterious currents which pass over the waters of the ocean as rivers pass over the land; that they were being carried, steadily, surely, southward toward those desolate frozen lands and seas of which next to nothing has ever been known.

For two days and nights they had drifted on. Then a new peril had threatened; small icebergs and broken fragments reaching ten or more feet

above the surface of the water and many more feet below, urged on by some strange undercurrents had begun pushing their way in zig-zag courses across the floe. The frail craft was momentarily threatened by these wandering monsters. Only a constant toil with vike poles and guying cables enabled them to prevent the catastrophe.

Hardly had this peril disappeared than the ice had begun crowding and piling. Then they had known that there was land ahead. Then it was that the oncoming ice pans had crushed their schooner and heaved it high upon the ice where it lay.

“And here we are,” Don grumbled to himself. “Don’t know where we are

but we're likely to stay here or hereabouts for at least nine months and probably forever."

After uttering this rather pessimistic comment, he turned once more to his task.

In the meantime Rodger was making his way steadily shoreward. Now narrowly escaping being crushed by an overhanging cake of ice and now leaping a narrow chasm of dark waters which waited to engulf him, he hurried onward for a half hour, when, on climbing a particularly high and steady ice-pile he paused for a glance ahead, then caught his breath.

"Cliffs! Rocky, barren cliffs!" he murmured, half in despair.

On climbing down he found himself, much to his delight, on a broad surface of ice which was not buckling and piling, the solid collar of ice which skirted the edge of the cliffs.

“Well, anyway,” he breathed, “we’ll be safe on this for a time.”

Hurrying across this solid stretch of shore-ice, he soon gave a shout of joy. Shore was much nearer than he had hoped. The cliffs stood back a distance from that shore. The real shore was composed of a sandy and pebbly beach, backed by alternating strips of snow and barren land.

“Land! Land!” he murmured. “Real, level land!” and, in his surprise and joy he sank for a moment to his knees.

For a moment he gave himself over to reverie and speculation. Was this indeed the shore of the great Antarctic continent? They had drifted far with the floes. Had they passed all islands to find themselves at last on the mainland? He hoped so, for, many had been the time he had dreamed of visiting this strangely isolated, uninhabited, frozen continent!

“Uninhabited. Not a man, not a dog, not a living creature of any sort except birds,” he exclaimed. “And yet a continent, a vast, unknown continent.”

As if to give the lie to his words there smote his ears a familiar sound.

Was it? Could it be? Yes, it was; the sound of a dog's bark.

"A dog," he exclaimed. "Where there are dogs, there must be men." He hurried forward.

But again he paused. "Dogs," he mumbled, "perhaps wild dogs or wolves. Perhaps, after all, there are wolves; dangerous fellows and I'm not armed."

At once he began to exercise the utmost caution. Hiding behind this ice-pile, then that one, he at last came to the base of a ridge of land.

Climbing to the crest of this he looked about him.

A quarter mile to the right of him

was a large penguin rookery; emperor penguins they were, huge fellows. Three or four feet in height, they strutted about like men, waving their short flipper-like wings and chattering constantly.

To one side he discovered the cause of all their excitement. A single dog, or was it a wolf? At least a great, gaunt, gray creature was attempting an assault upon the village.

For a moment he gave himself over to watching this peculiar battle. But suddenly he became conscious of the fact that the fog had cleared. Glancing away toward the ocean, he caught sight of the schooner, a gray spot on a field of ice; saw something, too, that

caused a groan to escape from his lips; an iceberg, born by some undercurrent, was pressing down upon the ice-pan on which the schooner rested. Some seventy feet above the sea it appeared to tower almost directly over the ill-fated craft.

“If—if it strikes—we’re lost,” he muttered.

At the same instant his attention was attracted by some slight sound behind him. Turning quickly he saw, not twenty paces away, the gaunt, gray creature, who had but a moment before been annoying the penguins. With red tongue lolling and blood-shot eyes gleaming, he was coming straight on.

The boy's heart paused for an instant, then raced madly. His mind worked rapidly. He was alone on a frozen continent, unarmed. A savage beast was pursuing him. Perhaps there were others. He looked about for some haven of refuge, but saw none.

* * *

At that instant the two boys left on the ice-floe beside the wrecked schooner, having paused for a moment from their labor, were leaning upon a pile of cases talking, when, with a startled exclamation, Ole pointed toward the sky to the southward. Don saw and his lips too parted in an unuttered exclamation.

The sun, sending a broad gleam of

light across the fog, had tinted a jogged crag the white-red hue of molten iron.

“Land,” Don whispered at last.

“No—no,” Ole whispered hoarsely.

“Not land. An iceberg. She is bearing down upon us. If she strikes, we are lost.”

“Wha—what can—can we do?” stammered the other boy.

“Nothing, only wait. Bye and bye, if it looks too bad, we may flee, but fleeing will do no good. Today we can save ourselves, but tomorrow we starve.”

It was a strange experience; standing there watching that immense mass of ice like some great ocean liner as it bore down upon them. Chill after chill passed up and down Don’s spine, leav-

ing him at last feeling white and cold.

“It’s the currents, the undercurrents,” murmured Ole. “They’re pushing it on from beneath.”

The ice-floe which had for the moment ceased to pile, urged on by this great on-moving force, began to pile again. A cake six feet through and a hundred wide began gliding upon their haven of refuge. Slowly, silently it tilted upward.

“The schooner,” exclaimed Ole. “That cake will crush it. We must save it.”

He rushed for the capstan and began to wind it. Reluctantly, Don followed his example. Slowly the schooner moved forward. Slowly but surely the cake gained upon them. Now it was

ten feet away, now five, now three. And now—now it towered above the prow of the schooner. And above all, menacing, threatening, hovered the iceberg, which by now had changed to a dull blue thing like chilled steel.

“Come on,” said Don. “We’ll be killed.”

Doggedly, as if not hearing him, Ole turned at the capstan.

Don leaped. He was off the schooner. Then things began to happen. The great cake of ice, lurching forward, fell with a grinding sound across the prow of the schooner. The air was filled with bits of ice. A wild gust of sleet like snow hailed down upon him. He was thrown flat upon the ice.

At that instant there came a sound as of violent cannonading. This was instantly followed by such a grinding, howling, screeching pandemonium as Don had never experienced. Then came a furious rocking of the cake of ice on which he rested. Tipping at an angle of forty-five degrees, it swayed from side to side, then plunged with a great swash into the briny water. It seemed inevitable that they, the schooner, and all should be pitched into the sea. He had given himself up as lost when, of a sudden, he found himself buried in snow and fragments of ice. A large bit struck him on the head. For a moment he lost conscious-

ness. When he came to himself all was quiet, quiet as the grave.

Madly he groped in his mind for ideas adequate to express that which had just happened. Then he fell to wondering. Where was Ole? What had happened to the schooner? He attempted to rise. Then cold perspiration sprang out upon his brow. He could not move. He could not stir an inch. Some great weight was crushing the breath out of him.

CHAPTER V

Don Disappears

When Rodger found himself facing the wild-eyed and evidently famished creature, which from his shaggy gray coat might be taken for either a wolf or a dog, he found himself at his wits' end. To flee seemed senseless. The creature would easily overtake him and spring upon his back. The hard-packed snow beneath his feet revealed

no possible weapon of defense, not so much as a rock.

He threw one glance behind him. A rugged cliff of granite flanked the sloping hillside on which he stood. With his back to this wall he would be better able to defend himself. After having taken his clasp-knife from his pocket, he began backing away toward the cliff. The wild creature appeared to view this action with suspicion. He followed slowly but kept a certain distance between them, some ten paces.

Rodger kept his eyes constantly upon him. It was ticklish business, this backing away over unknown snow banks without seeing where one was going. He might at any moment trip

over an unexpected ridge or hollow and go sprawling. And, if he did, there could be no question that with three bounds the beast would be upon him.

With heart beating madly, with toes a-tremble he took each step with caution. Each moment seemed an hour, each rod a mile, but at last he felt the brush of rock against his back and knew he had made his objective.

This appeared to displease the dog, for he let out a threatening growl and lessened the distance between them by half. Measuring his strength against the possible powers of this dog-wolf, the boy braced himself for the struggle which seemed certain to come. Bar-

ring accidents, he believed he would win the battle, but realized that he must be terribly mangled doing it.

The creature had settled down on his haunches. His head was an ugly sight. It was raw and bleeding in places where the giant penguins had beaten him off with their powerful flippers.

When Rodger could stand the strain no longer, he began talking to the animal as one might reason with a madman:

“Get out, can’t you? You’re some kind of a dog. Can’t be a wolf, for there’s not a quadruped native to this land. Yes, you’re a dog. Had a master once, didn’t you? He was a man; a man, I tell you! And I’m a man

Your master brought you here. You ran away like as not, but that's no reason why you should wish to eat me now. Come, come, let's be friends." He put out a hand.

The answer was a start back and an angry growl. The next instant the creature gave a forward bound. Catching his breath and gripping the hilt of his knife until it fairly cut into his hand, the boy waited the final struggle which he felt should come quickly.

Then a strange thing happened. The dog started and cocked his head on one side as if hearing sounds behind him. Then he half turned about.

Instantly Rodger saw what had disturbed him. A tall mother penguin

was toiling laboriously up the slope. In her beak was a large fish, freshly taken from the sea.

Before the boy could realize what was happening, the dog was away with a bound. Seeing this on-rushing fury, the penguin, with an angry squeak, dropped the fish and prepared to defend herself.

The dog paid not the least attention to her protestations, but seized the fish and dashed away over the slope. He was followed by the still protesting housewife of the penguin village.

For a moment, Rodger could scarcely realize that he was free to go his way. When he did realize it, he hurried down to the ice-field and quickly lost him-

self among the heaped up piles which lay all about him. As he did so a scrap of a poem taken from his school days was upon his lips:

“Take, eat,” he said, “and be content,
These fishes in your stead were sent
By him who sent the tangled ram
To spare the child of Abraham.”

* * *

Hardly had Don over by the schooner realized that he was pinned fast to the ice than he felt the burden on his back ease away for a second, then settle back with an almost crushing force. He thought he heard a grumbling sound; then all was silence. For fully a moment he endured the crushing force

which seemed destined to drive the last breath of air from his lungs. Then, just when he was about to give up hope, the weight suddenly lifted and did not return.

Shaking the ice debris from off him, he sat up dizzily. He opened his eyes and stared about him. Ole, with a pike-pole in his hand, was bending over him. To the right of him was a large fragment of blue, fresh-water ice.

“Wha—what happened?” he was able to stammer.

“Bloomin’ iceberg struck bottom and floundered. Then she split in two and tipped over. Might have been the death of us, but she wasn’t. Worst that happened was that piece there dropped

over here and tipped onto you. Lucky she didn't strike you square. Hurt any?"

Don felt himself over carefully. "Think not. Few bumps, that's all."

"We're fortunate. That's all I've got to say," exclaimed Ole. "Thing that might have destroyed us has made us safe." He pointed away at the gigantic pile of blue ice that lay away from them some two hundred fathoms. "She's grounded good and hard, high tide too. We're in a sort of bay; regular little harbor. There'll be no more ice-piling. Iceberg won't let it by. Freeze up pretty soon. Fifteenth of March now. By the first of April winter'll be down in earnest."

“Wint—winter,” Don scratched his head. “April? Winter?” Then he threw back his head and laughed. “I can’t seem to remember we’re in the Southern hemisphere. Of course it will be winter by April and by June it will be 50 below zero.”

“Sure,” grinned Ole, “and there’s land over there where Rodger’s gone. Fog’s lifted. Look! Over there’s a lot of cliffs and tall mountains. We’ll get our supplies over there and build a cabin out of this wreck. We’re good for two years anyway, and with penguin, seal meat and the like we might make it even as much as five or six.”

“Five or six years!” Don groaned.

“Sure, why not?” came a laughing

voice from behind him. It was Rodger. "Just think," he went on, "of the wonderful discoveries we might make in that time on this unexplored continent. Annual summer trip to the South Pole and all that! Wonderful experience, I'd say!" He slapped Don on the back.

"And what's more," he went on in a moment, "I've just had a narrow escape from some sort of savage, wild dog."

"A dog? Dog?" the others echoed.

"Yep; a sure enough dog."

"We'll catch him and tame him," cried Ole enthusiastically. "Perhaps there are others. We'll have a team for freighting."

"I'm not so sure about that," Rodger

shook his head. "At any rate, I'd donate to you the task of taming him. He gave me one fright of my life and one's enough. Say! You fellows had anything to eat? I'm starved."

If order is Heaven's first law, then, more often than not, a good square meal is the first move toward restoring order out of chaos. Everything about the wrecked schooner was in disordered heaps, but out of these heaps the boys managed to extract a gasoline stove and the makings of a credible "Mulligan" stew. When this had been devoured, things seemed half set to rights. They found it possible to imagine that they had come to this spot of their own free will and had not been carried and

dumped here by unreasoning Mother Nature.

“Next thing’s a good sleep,” said Rodger emphatically. “I think Ole is right; there’ll be no further disturbance for the present at least. We’ll arrange some of these cases in the form of a square with a layer in the middle for a bed and, after piling it full of blankets, pull a canvas over it. Then you fellows can crawl in there and sleep. I’ll stand watch for four hours. Ole, you’ll take the next watch and Don you the last. When that’s over, we’ll be ready for work, and work it will be, getting our stuff over that junk pile of ice.”

Morning found them greatly re-

freshed. The air had cleared completely. They were able to see the ragged shore of the land they had discovered, for perhaps twenty miles up and down the coast.

“It’s the continent, sure as anything,” exclaimed Rodger. See that long range of mountains in the distance? Nothing like that on any of the islands. I’ve read the explorers; Jean Charcot and all the rest. None of them tell of a range like that on the islands. And there’s one of these mountains, got a sort of white cloud hovering over it all the time, must be a volcano; active one too. There are some on the continent. I say we’ll have a grand time exploring.”

“Exploring’s all right,” said Don, “but I wish the schooner wasn’t so frightfully smashed. I’d like to think about getting away when the ice breaks up in the spring.”

All three of the boys walked around to what had been the prow of the boat.

“Cut it off clean as if it had been sawed,” said Rodger, jerking his thumb at the yawning hole where the prow had been. The ice-pan had not only cut off the entire prow but had ground it into kindling.

“That’s nothing to what it would have been if Ole hadn’t risked his neck winding the capstan,” said Don. “Whole thing would have been ground to powder and all that’s left on board.”

“Good old Ole!” exclaimed Rodger, placing an appreciative hand on his shoulder. “But even at that, I don’t think we’ll ever be able to put her in shape to float again; not with the material we have at our disposal.”

“I say!” exclaimed Don suddenly. “If there’s a dog over there, there might be an expedition somewhere near.”

“Sorry to disappoint you,” smiled Rodger, “but there hasn’t been an Antarctic expedition for several years; the war put an end to that sort of thing.”

“Anyway,” insisted Don, “an expedition must have landed here at some time or other, perhaps wintered near here. If we can find their old camp, who knows what they may have left



"Good Old Ole!" Exclaimed Rodger

behind? Might even have left a picket-boat or something. Charcot left a gasoline engine and a number of other things on his first visit to the Antarctic and picked them up on his second expedition."

"You might be right," said Rodger. "Anyway, it's worth looking into."

When they at last set to work making up packs of blankets, cooking utensils and food for a trial trip to land, they found themselves in high spirits. It was almost as if news had arrived that there was a group of white settlers living in cabins right over the ridge beyond the point.

* * *

Three months later Don found him-

self making his way cautiously over the surface of a glacier. Only the moon and stars gave him light; but these, shining as they did, on the glistening whiteness all about, made it seem light as day; the shadows were deeper, the light paler, that was all.

He was on one more search for that former camp of a polar expedition which they all felt sure must exist somewhere along the shores of this, their continent. Forsaken as it had been long ago by some explorer, he felt sure that there must have been some articles of interest and value left behind.

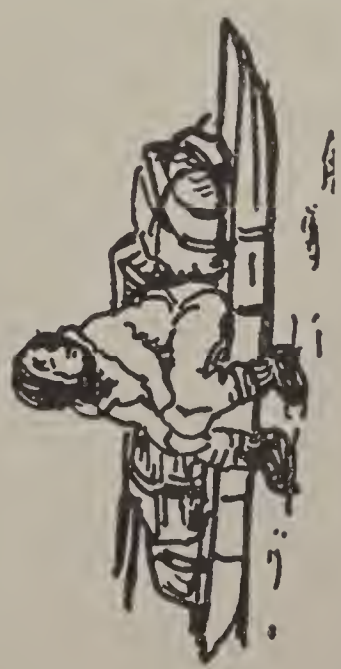
His mind, as he made his way across the glacier, was busy with many

thoughts. Somehow, he felt in a vague sort of way that important events were to transpire on this day, he would discover the lost camp perhaps; who could tell? There were times when the whole affair seemed terribly unreal to him. The very thought that there could be a vast continent stretching a thousand miles and more to the south, east and west of them with never a soul living on it save themselves, seemed impossible.

The other boys had long since fully accepted it as a fact. Ole had interested himself in their winter camp. They had all worked hard at it for a time. The ice between the schooner and shore had frozen solidly together almost at

once. They had constructed rude sleds and had cut a rough path to shore. Over the path they had dragged all their supplies and, with infinite labor, had brought all the parts of the crushed schooner after them. From the wreckage they had constructed a cabin. From empty gasoline cans Ole had fashioned a great heating drum which he fitted over their gasoline stove. There was an abundant supply of gasoline so that they would not freeze, but Ole had supplemented this with oil taken from seals killed along the floes.

Out of the depths of a solid bank of snow they had cut them a store-room for supplies of fresh meat. Quantities



They had constructed rude sleds

of seal and penguin meat were stored here against the day when the penguins were all gone north to warmer climes and the seals had disappeared.

Now that they were snugly “tucked in” for the winter, Rodger had turned his attention to securing interesting geological and mineralogical specimens of this little-known land. One day he would appear with some strange, new species of fish forcibly obtained from some irate penguin who had been down to the sea for his dinner. Next day he would tell of having discovered what appeared to be a beautifully green, grass-grown valley, only to find on approaching it that it was a stretch of

barren rock and snow ridges completely buried with millions of tiny green diatoms.

“Think of it!” he had exclaimed that night, “a whole continent without a tree, a bush, a flower, or even a blade of grass on it! Not that it wouldn’t grow, either. Charcot’s men raised flowers, omons and cress on this soil under glass. No seed, never been any seed brought here; I guess the answer. Plenty of grass in North Polar lands.”

But, though Ole found himself quite happy keeping camp and Rodger in studying nature, Don had never quite settled himself to the facts and conditions as they were.

“Hang it all!” he had exclaimed at times, “it seems so almighty unreal. We’ve proof enough that people have been here. Why can’t we find where they have been?”

Their proof that they had been here was the “Outlaw,” as they had come to call the wolf-dog who at times haunted the outskirts of their camp.

The supposition that this dog had gone completely wild had proven correct. Not only were they not able to make friends with him, but at times, as in the first instance of Rodger’s meeting him, he assumed a menacing attitude.

“He’s dangerous; he is!” Ole had

stated stoutly more than once. "We ought to shoot him and put him out of his misery!"

"Oh, no, you can't quite do that," Don had always replied. "Just think, he's the only land animal besides ourselves on all this continent. He, like ourselves, once lived in a land of sunshine and flowers."

There the question had always been dropped, but when they went on long trips they never failed to at least provide themselves with pistols.

"You never can tell when that Outlaw'll show up," Ole put it.

And Don, as he made his way across the glacier, turned every now and then to look back. He was thinking of the

Outlaw. Perhaps it was this or his pre-occupation which caused the disaster which ultimately befell him on that day.

He was thinking of their former attempts to discover the camp of the explorers. They had all gone in enthusiastically for the search at first; all in their imaginations had seen an empty hull stranded on the beach; just the thing they needed in which to install their engine and to go pop-popping away into open water when spring came. But when, on forced marches of two and three days over towering precipices and yawning glaciers, they had gone up and down the coast for twenty miles without discovering a

single trace of human life, their enthusiasm had abated and Don alone had kept up the search. His sole hope lay in the fact that the camp might be nearly buried in snow and was to be found only by a more careful search.

The surface of the glacier, which ran a hundred or more feet above the level of the sea, was crossed and recrossed by yawning crevasses. Some of these Don was able to step across with ease, some required a springing leap, and some he must follow along for a considerable distance before finding a safe crossing.

He had wound his way in and out among these when, at last, he came to what appeared to be a broad stretch

of unseamed ice covered over with a coating of snow.

Had he not been thinking so seriously of many things, he might have suspected danger in the midst of false security.

He did, indeed, suspect danger, but from the wrong source. Having caught some sound behind him, he was searching the ice for some sign of the skulking gray form of the Outlaw, when, with a sickening glide, he felt the snow crumble away beneath his feet. With a cry of dismay he felt himself shoot swiftly downward to dark depths below. An icy crevice had been thinly coated over with hard-packed snow. Under his weight this insecure crust

had given way. He was shooting downward. To what? He could not tell.

* * *

When Don had been absent from the cabin ten hours his companions began to be worried about him. Two hours later Rodger was pacing the floor and at the end of another hour he drew on his parka, and with a "Come on, Ole; something has happened to him," made his way out into the moonlight.

"It's that dog," grumbled Ole, fingering the trigger of his rifle. "If ever I lay eyes on him again he's a dead one. I always knew he'd do for some one of us."

To the boys the great silence of those untenanted shores seemed weird and

unnatural. A great foreboding came over them and they were silent as the ice-locked sea.

They had taken the beach trail and at every turn of a rocky point expected to catch the long-drawn, mournful wail of the Outlaw as he lifted his voice to the silent night in his song of the frozen South. Down deep in his heart each boy expected to catch in the distance the fiery gleam of his eyes and to hurry up only to find him crouching over the torn body of their fallen comrade.

When, at last, they came upon his tracks, it was as if their expectations were beginning to be fulfilled. Eagerly, but with great dread, they followed his footprints. When they had followed on

for a mile or more, the track suddenly turned to the right, leading away out upon the frozen sea.

“Better go on down the beach a way,” said Ole. “He’ll most likely wander around out there then turn back to the shore.”

This prophecy proved correct. A quarter mile on down the beach they did come upon his tracks once more.

“But what is this?” said Rodger, pointing to a dark spot in the snow beside the track.

“Blood,” said Ole, after examining it carefully.

“He’s made a kill and is carrying away some meat. Perhaps crabbing seal.”

"I'm not so sure."

"Sure of what?"

"Come on," Ole hurried rapidly forward.

At every step they saw drops of blood frozen into the snow. Rodger shivered. It was ghastly, this following a living thing in and out among those shadows with drops of blood on every yard of the trail.

Suddenly, as they rounded a point, Ole stopped abruptly.

"There he is," he whispered, jerking his thumb to the right, where a dark, gray object broke the even whiteness of the snow.

"Easy now"—Ole cocked his rifle.

On tip toes, with bated breath, they

approached the silent figure. As they came nearer they saw that he was lying stretched out at full length with fore-paws reaching out as if to grasp something.

Ole did not pause until he was near enough to touch him with his rifle. Then he poked his rifle against the animal's ribs.

Rodger sprang back.

Ole uttered a low, harsh laugh. "No fear," he muttered, "He's dead."

"Dead?" Rodger shivered.

"Dead and frozen stiff."

A chill ran up Rodger's spine. This creature was dead. But a few hours before, there had been four living creatures on this frozen continent who had

felt the breath of a spring breeze in the land of sunshine and flowers. Now there were but three. Who would be the next? Was Don already gone? What did it matter now—that Ole had sworn to kill the Outlaw? He was sorry.

“Question is,” said Ole huskily, bending over to examine the dog, how’d he come by his death. Been in a big scrap. He’s all cut and torn. Question is, was it a sea-leopard or Don that cut him up; and if it was Don, how’d he come out? That’s what we must find out.”

“Only way to find out is to back trail him on the ice floes.”

“I’ll go back there,” said Ole, “you might take a turn up on the cliff and the

glacier; might see some signs up there. Be back here in three-quarters of an hour."

They separated at once.

Rodger had not been on the surface of the glacier ten minutes when he came upon the imprint of Don's alpine staff in the snow. Eagerly then, he hurried forward, glad to know that, at least, if his companion had perished, the Outlaw was not responsible for his death.

Don's zigzag track was hard to follow. Often he lost it and was obliged to search for five minutes. Here a shadow deceived him. Now the moon went under a cloud and left all in darkness. Perplexed, exasperated yet eager,

he pressed on. Twenty, thirty, forty minutes passed. Then suddenly, without warning, he came upon the end of the trail.

There he stood, stunned, motionless, unable for a moment to move or speak. Then with a wild wail of despair he threw himself flat upon the hard-crusts snow to creep to the edge of the dark hold that yawned before him and to call again and again.

“Don! Don! Oh Don!”

But the only answer that came back to him was the echo and re-echo of his own voice as it was cast back and forth by the flinty walls of that awful icy canyon.

CHAPTER VI

A Great Discovery

When Don felt his footing give way and knew that he was about to plunge downward to the very heart of the glacier, he threw out his right hand in an attempt to grasp the wall of the crevice. His grip on the smooth surface lasted for but an instant. Then, with a sudden intake of breath, he sensed the cold air rushing by him. Before he could

realize what had happened, he felt himself jammed solidly down between the two walls of the crevice which come closer and closer together as they approach the base of the glacier.

He was dressed in sealskin coat and trousers, made for him by Ole, who had once lived with the Laplanders. The tough skin in these garments protected his flesh from the ugly cuts which it must otherwise surely have received, for he had fallen fully forty feet.

His attempt to save himself by gripping the rim of the crevice had been futile yet that movement was doubtless the means of saving his life at least. When he had fully recovered his senses, he found himself so tightly jammed into

the crevice that he at first did not appear able to move a muscle.

For an instant dark dread of being held in this icy grip until, chilled through and through, he at last would lose consciousness never again to see sunlight, flashed through his mind. But, being of a hopeful turn of mind and a fighter by nature, he braced himself for a desperate struggle.

A calm and careful survey of his condition revealed the fact that his right hand was sticking straight up, just as it had been when he lost his hold on the edge of the crevice. Every attempt at movement cost him a groan of pain, for he was bruised and cramped to an

almost unbearable degree. He did find, however, that he could swing his right arm downward until it extended straight before him.

In his belt, over his right front trousers' pocket there hung a small axe.

"Now," he told himself, "if only I can get my hand down to that axe I may be able to improve my position."

For a full half hour, he struggled to achieve this apparently simple feat. All the time his limbs, pressed upon on both sides as they were, were becoming more and more benumbed with cold.

"I got—got'a work fast," he mumbled.

At last, with a supreme effort, he brought his hand into contact with the head of the axe.

Then there followed an agonizing ten minutes in which he worked the axe from its leather loop. Appalled at the very thought that, at the last moment he might fumble and drop the axe, he felt the cold perspiration stand out on his forehead. Yet, slowly, surely his benumbed fingers gripped the handle of the prize.

“Now, what to do with it?” he whispered to himself.

At once he resolved what to do. He would attempt to cut a hole in the icy wall, just at the highest possible reach of his right hand. When this was done,

he would attempt to draw himself out of the trap.

Tap—tap—tap went the axe.

Fine shivers of ice came sifting down upon him, glided down his neck. To these he gave little heed; he was making headway. There was hope yet.

Three times he worked the axe into the pocket of his coat; three times attempted to lift himself free and three times failed. But the fourth attempt brought relief. He lifted himself a few inches. His left arm was free.

Five painful moments followed in which he brought that half-frozen member back to life, holding on desperately the while with his right.

When this was accomplished, he

gripped the axe with his left hand and cut a hole for his right foot. Here again he was balked; his foot was too much benumbed for action.

In time, however, he did secure a footing and, by exercising first one, then the other of his limbs, he brought all his muscles back to form. When this was accomplished he breathed a sigh of hope and proceeded to survey his surroundings. Above him towered two icy walls. To strive to make his way up was to attempt a perilous, perhaps impossible, thing; another glide like the last one and he would not find himself possessed of sufficient strength for the battle.

Before him, a long way off, lay a

narrow line of light. This he knew to be the end of the crevice where the glacier faced his sea. To work his way out by cutting notches in the ice, step by step, appeared an almost endless task. But a white line at the foot of the crevice gave him hope. This line began some fifty feet away. Was it snow? If snow it was, and hard-packed enough to allow him to walk upon it, his troubles were ended. He resolved to attempt it.

Slowly, foot by foot, he made his way to that point; then, with trembling heart, he put his foot upon the snow which had blown in, and partly filled, the crevice.

To his great joy, he found it quite

solid. Edging his way outward, foot by foot, he at last found himself standing on the top of a small mountain of snow, looking away over the silent sea.

Almost involuntarily he drew his cap from off his head and stood there in awed reverence while his lips stammered words of thanks.

For a moment only, he stood there; then, realizing that he would be late in reaching the cabin; that his companions would be worried, he hurried down the snowy slope to search for a safe path back up the slope.

Much to his surprise, he found himself on a narrow stretch of shore which they had never visited; indeed, so narrow and so snow-covered it was that

they had believed that along this stretch of rocky cliff there existed no beach but that, in summer, the waves beat square against the granite wall.

This discovery quickened his pulse. Was he about to make an important discovery? The answer was not far to seek. As he came over a huge pile of snow and ice-debris, he found himself staring open-mouthed at the roof of a long, narrow, shed-like structure.

With a shout and a spring he was away to explore it. But even as he came near to it, he paused. It seemed almost impossible that there should be an uninhabited building as substantial as this one on this lost continent. Were there, after all, human beings, wild

savages perhaps, or Orientals living here?

Shaking these strange thoughts from him, he moved forward to round a corner and to discover a door, closed and fastened with a padlock.

The lock was of brass. It bore on its face strange figures of dragons and unnamable creatures.

“Oriental,” he breathed, and once more, for an instant, the dread was upon him.

But the bar and staple were of iron and were all but rusted off. This dispelled his fears. Two stout kicks brought the lock jangling down. The next instant the door was pushed in

and he fell sprawling into the room; the snow had been packed some two feet high against the base of the door.

He found himself in a narrow hallway. At the end of this hallway was a second door. Having opened this he found himself in a long, rather narrow room lighted by four small, heavily-glassed windows. As his eyes became accustomed to the light he saw in the far end of the room a number of sacks filled with some commodity.

“Flour,” he murmured. “Not much use to us.”

He examined the boards of which the house was built.

“Poor stuff. No good for repairing our ship’s hull.”

With a leisurely stride he walked to where the sacks were piled.

“Look dry enough,” he muttered.
“Good roof.”

He touched a sack. “Dusty.”

He examined the tips of his fingers.
“That’s queer. Sort of gritty.”

Striking a sack with his axe he cut a gash in it. Into this he dug his fingers, then examined the material that came out with them.

“Cement!” he ejaculated. “That’s queer. Some exploring expedition. Used it for bases for their instruments; things for measuring tides, winds and electrical disturbances and for watching the stars. Had some left. Can’t see’s it is going to do us much good,

unless—" he scratched his head. "By George, I believe we could!" There was a joyous note in his voice which had not been there for months.

Turning quickly, he rushed out of the building, closed both doors and was off for his own cabin as fast as his bruise-stiffened legs could carry him.

* * *

When Rodger received no answer to his repeated calls down into the crevice into which he was sure Don had fallen, he tried lighting matches and allowing them to drop into the dark depths, but each one flared out before it had dropped ten feet. He tore his cotton handkerchief into strips and, lighting these, one by one, dropped

them after the matches. This brought better results, but with even these he was not able to see clearly to a depth of over thirty feet.

At last, giving up in despair, he hurried away to find Ole. He met him coming up the slope. Ole had found the spot where the Outlaw had made his last fight with a huge sea-leopard. The dog had attacked and killed the sea-leopard's cub and had been engaged in devouring it when the irate mother had come up through her hole in the ice and had attacked him. Angered by her onslaught, he had doubtless returned the attack and her sharp teeth had done the rest.

Ole shared Rodger's consternation

over the apparent ill fate of their comrade.

“We must hurry to the cabin for ropes and a lantern,” Rodger said, starting off on a run. “He may be unconscious, not dead. Perhaps we can save him yet.” Ole joined him in the race to the cabin.

Quite out of breath, they at last rounded a point which gave them a view of their cabin.

Suddenly Rodger stopped short. “A light,” he exclaimed. “We didn’t leave a light.”

“No, we didn’t,” said Ole decidedly. “I remember blowing it out myself.”

“Then what—”

For a moment they stood there un-

decided. No man, or boy either, ever gets so far from the accustomed haunts of men but that he is constantly expecting to see some strange human being round a point and come into his view. To these boys, a stranger seemed the only solution to the present problem. Impossible as it seemed, it appeared far more probable than that Don had escaped from his icy tomb and, unassisted, had made his way to the cabin.

Without another word, they began making their way toward the cabin. The double window on the south was never frosted over. To this they made their way, the last few steps on tip-toe. Rodger was the first to look within. Instantly there escaped from his lips

a whoop of joy. Then Ole looked only to join him in the shout. Don, stripped to the skin, hovering near the heating drum, was rubbing liniment into his many bruises.

“Shut that door. Want a fellow to freeze?” he exclaimed as they burst into the cabin.

“But—but—how—how.”

“Shut that door, I tell you!”

The door closed, Don turned and grinned at them. “How’d I get out? That’s a long story. But I’ve got a better one than that, a whole lot better than that; it’s the story of how we’ll leave this blamed old continent in the spring.”

“You didn’t—”

“Yes, I did. I found the explorer’s camp.”

“And was there a boat?” Ole questioned eagerly.

“Not any boat, far as I could see.”

Ole’s face lost its eager smile. “Then how—”

“That’s a long story, too,” smiled Don, drawing on his trousers, “at least it will be before we get through—it’ll mean a lot of hard work, but we’ll make it all right. We’ll sail with the first open water.”

With no thought of supper, the two boys listened eagerly to Don’s story of the discovery and his plans for the future.

“This is the way we’ll do it,” he ex-

plained, spreading paper on the table and sketching roughly with a pencil.

“Yes, and there’s the ten pieces of hickory in our supplies and the hundred feet of steel rod,” supplemented Ole. “That’ll make bolts and rivets. Whoop-ee!” He leaped in air to dance a jig. “But say.” he sat down suddenly, “how about—”

And so the discussion went on for two hours.

At last Don rose and stretched himself.

“Say!” he exclaimed, “when did you fellows eat last?”

“I—I can’t quite remember,” admitted Rodger.

“Then don’t you suppose it’s time we

indulged in that little bad habit once more?" laughed Don, shoving the coffee pot over the fire and reaching out a friendly hand to drag Ole, the chief cook, up on his feet.



CHAPTER VII

In the Crater of Erebus

Winter in the Antarctic is long, nine months of snow and ice with never a thaw. As long as there was work to be done toward assuring a return to civilization in the spring, the boys labored on early and late. But the winter was not half gone when they found themselves with nothing to do but to wait, and, for three husky boys, wait-

ing was just the hardest part of any undertaking.

“Ole!” said Rodger, on one of these long days of waiting, “there’s a grand old volcano way back there somewhere; I’ve seen the steam rising from it often. How’d you like to try to make its summit?”

“Fine! Great idea!” exclaimed Ole enthusiastically. “Might find some gold up that way, too.” Ole had not forgotten that they had hoped to make a search for gold on the Antarctic islands. He meant to make a try for Pendulum Cove, once they were safely away from the continent. But, now, why not a search for it right here?”

“That’s right, we might,” Rodger agreed.

“We’ll have to make our preparations rather carefully,” he said, after a moment’s thought. Can’t count on finding any food on the way, and it’s rather a long trip. Guess we better go about it by degrees. Drag some sled-loads of food far as we can one day; then establish a cache. Then we’ll go back for more. In this way we’ll have a line of food stations to fall back on. There’s not a creature on all the hills to disturb our food; not since the Outlaw’s dead.”

Seven days of hard labor saw sufficient caches established to make them

feel sure of a safe journey. There followed a howling blizzard which came sweeping down from the south and, for the time being, all journeys were postponed. They were not afraid of having their caches completely buried in snow as they had marked each one with a bit of red cloth tacked to a pole.

At last the storm passed and the air cleared. That morning they were away. Only Don was left to guard camp.

They covered a broad stretch of tundra and low-lying hills that day but night saw them still far from the mountain. Three days of hard travel only sufficed to bring them to the goal. It was with anxious heart that Rodger

found himself at last looking down into the steaming bowl that formed the crest of the volcano.

“We must hurry on back,” he was telling himself. “Only one day’s provisions and five days of travel. How foolish we have been.”

In that instant a new and terrible peril seized his companion and sent him gliding down to what appeared to be certain death. He had stepped on a thinly crusted hole where steam had been arising. The next instant he was gone.

“Ole! Ole!” Rodger cried wildly, leaning forward to peer down into the depths into which his companion had fallen.

The great bowl from which vapor and steam were constantly rising, allowed but a scant view of its vastness. Perhaps this vast crater was the greatest in the known world. Certainly it measured a half mile from edge to edge, and the distance into its fiery, steam-laden depths was nine hundred feet. Constantly from these depths there came a thunderous, bubbling sound, as of a gigantic caldron about to boil over. It was this that would render a shout by the strongest voice inaudible at a hundred feet distance. And yet the boy had hoped—he had hoped, what had he hoped? What dared he to hope? Could one return from the dead? Then, indeed, one might return from that un-

known, unexplored chasm which one might enter only by an accidental slip into its unmeasured depths. Such a slide as this had plunged his friend into—into—who knew what?

Presently Rodger rose and began pacing back and forth along the edge. He could do nothing; that was the thought that drove him to distraction. If he had a rope he might dangle it down into the vapory depths in a vain hope that Ole might be lodged down there somewhere in the hidden walls, and might seize it and be drawn to safety. But he had no rope. The nearest rope was a day's journey from that spot, and it was but a light, short rope with which they had tied their

packs on making the ascent of the mountain. It would be useless. He could do nothing, and yet how could he leave the spot where he had last seen the white, frightened face of his pal, as he plunged into those depths into which he now so vainly peered?

A good friend Ole had been, and this last journey with all its perils had welded their lives together in an almost inseparable bond.

It had been a perilous climb to the top. Once a blizzard had threatened to sweep them from the glistening glacier's surface into some unknown abyss beyond. Over tottering glacier surfaces, through cold such as neither had known before, they had made their

way till, at last, they had stood at the very rim of this, the most wonderful and mysterious of nature's phenomena, a volcano covered forever with a canopy of ice and snow.

And they had stood there in awe-struck wonder at it all. Far below them, stretching away and away, lay the great unknown Antarctic Continent. A continent! Not an island merely, but a great, vast continent unknown! One man with his few followers had made his way to the center of it and had planted a flag there in the name of his native land, but even he was caught in the iron grip of this frozen land and was able to tell his story only through the written record

which he left behind. The Antarctic Continent! How their hearts had thrilled at thought of it!

And then they had looked down into those hidden depths from which came the thundering sound of mighty boiling fires, and from whose huge interior gave on many a night the reflection of vast hidden fires.

They had looked and marveled, and then Ole, stepping too near, had slipped. There had been a cry and he was gone. Gone! That was all. No answer came to the call of the boy on the rim of the abyss, and now he sat there desolate and alone. How could he ever return and attempt to tell of the fate of his comrade?

And Ole, having shot downward an almost perpendicular wall of ice and wind-hardened snow, at last arrived at a more gradual slope and at the same time realized that the snow over which he was passing had been softened by a recent steam eruption of the volcano. Desperately, as a last hope, he dug his heels into the snow while he clung to it till his hands were raw and bleeding. But slowly, surely, his speed slackened, and as it did so the snow began to collect before him in the form of a small avalanche. Then, for a moment this young avalanche paused. Instantly the boy dug his heels into the yielding snow and scrambled with all speed to the right of the snow, which seemed

trembling over an abyss. With heart almost still, he heard, a moment later, the thunder of the avalanche he had started as it went crashing into space below.

Instantly his mind was at work. He now had a chance for his life—a very slim chance, but a chance nevertheless. How soon would the volcano go through another eruption and emit fumes that would kill any unfortunate creature which might find itself within its caldron? This he could not tell. How was he to make his way up that almost perpendicular hundred feet, down which he had shot rather than slid? This he could not tell. But this one thing he could do. He could make his

way up over the more gradual slope and the softer snow to where the steep ascent began, and this he would do at once.

Fortunately his ice-axe remained in his belt. This he unslung, and where the snow seemed dangerously hard-packed, he cut steps for his feet. He was soon at the limit of this undertaking, for there lay before him a wall so perpendicular that no steeplejack, however clever, could hope to scale it.

Seeing this, he began making his way cautiously around the inside of the bowl, hoping against hope that he might find a more gradual slope to the summit. What he found instead was a more precipitous ascent which termi-

nated at last in a vast shelf. This proved to be an ice cavern cut some fifty feet into the side of the wall and from which hung giant icicles which might do credit to the tales of Gulliver.

Into this cavern, creeping between great inverted icicles, he went. He became conscious of a phenomenon which puzzled him. The fumes of sulphur, which made the air almost unbearable everywhere within the crater, were not traveling up to the roof of the cavern and then outward, but were constantly going to the back of the cavern. How were they escaping? Suddenly the boy's heart thrilled with hope and he increased his pace to such an extent that there was danger that he be pitched

headlong among the inverted icicles. At last he was at the very back of the cavern. Here he found holes going up through the ice above like flues to an engine. There were numbers of them, making the upper ice seem a mere honeycomb. The steam from the crater when the volcano was in eruption had undoubtedly gradually melted the ice through and established a passage to the open air above. He remembered to have seen holes of this kind on the surface at places from which sulphur fumes were arising.

But these holes were all small; none of them larger than six inches in diameter. They could be of no service to the boy in his endeavor to escape. But

suddenly he remembered to have seen one opening at the surface that was at least two feet in diameter. He made a mental calculation of the distance they had traveled over the rim before his fall and the distance he had traveled around the inside of the bowl since, and concluded that the openings they had seen at the top were the outlets to this very cavern.

“If only I can find that one opening! If only I can!” he murmured, and in his tone there was hope mingled with deep despair.

Madly he raced in and out among the icicles, ever peering above him, till at last with a cry of joy, he saw an opening larger than the rest, much

larger! Indeed, it was some four feet in diameter. His heart sank. How could he make his way through such an opening? If it were a foot less in diameter he might hope to use his back, his knees and his shoulders to force his way upward over the slippery surface, but four feet, he could never do that! But it was his only hope. He must try.

Quickly cutting steps in the glazed ice under the opening, he was at last beneath it. The fumes hid everything above. Indeed, here they were almost stifling. His eyes smarted and his throat burned. Yet he was determined. Wetting his handkerchief in some melted snow, he tied it over his face,

then thrust his shoulders into the opening.

To his delight, he found that the entrance grew almost instantly smaller, and he had cut but a few notches for his feet before he was able to maintain his position by simply bracing himself against the walls. Two problems now faced him. Was the hole truly the one with the two-foot opening at the top? And would he be able to endure the fumes which must gather about him as he ascended? How terrible it would be to find himself trapped within a few feet of the open air, or to feel himself gradually give way under the stifling of the fumes, and to tumble at last to

the bottom like a poisoned rat. It was his last chance. Setting his teeth tight and squaring his muscles for the ordeal, he began wriggling himself upward.

Rodger had remained seated and motionless at the rim of the volcano. He could do nothing but wait and hope, and this he did, though hope seemed beyond reason. And now as he sat there, the rumbling sound of boiling liquid became louder. It grew and grew, as does the sound of a night express approaching from a distance. Then there spread over the thickening and rising fumes and steam a pale yellow hue which gradually deepened into an orange and at last to a fiery red.

The crater of vapors seemed at last a great caldron filled almost to the brim with red and molten liquid.

The boy rose stiffly. He realized that now no creature in these depths could live. He realized also that not long would it be safe to remain on the rim of the volcano. Already the air was filled with sulphur fumes. He turned slowly to retrace his steps down the mountain, and as he turned found himself facing his chum. His clothes were torn, his face yellow with sulphur fumes, and haggard from the strain, but there he stood and very much alive at that.

Without a word, they turned to go plunging down the steep mountain-

side before the ever-advancing fumes. Slipping, sliding, racing, pausing to get their bearings, then plunging on again, they finally reached their camping-place in only a fraction of the time consumed in making the ascent.

There, by the light of the reflection which hung over the volcano, they cooked an appetizing meal of seal meat and tea, after which they crept into their sleeping-bags to rest, each mentally resolving that this should be his last adventure, a resolve which was destined to be dissipated by the glad rays of the morning sun.

CHAPTER VIII

Imperiled by Antarctic Sea Gulls

The following day found new trouble awaiting them. They were at the first cache of food when Rodger cast an uneasy glance toward the sky. Two great, ivory gulls were soaring aloft, flapping their way lazily southward.

“They fly as if they had but lately fed,” he said to Ole. The wrinkles in his brow deepened as he spoke. The

two gulls, slowly descending, alighted at last on the beacon the boys had just passed.

Ole knew what question was in his companion's mind. He, too, had been troubled at sight of the sea gulls. Had they been at the food-depots which lay before them on the trail? These gulls were prodigious eaters. Were there other gulls? Would the boys find the food-depots destroyed by these birds? The meat and pemmican had been piled loosely and unprotected on the cache of snow cakes. Who would dream that these birds traveled so far inland? There could be nothing for them to seek here. Were they crossing the great Antarctic Continent? This prob-

lem, though an interesting one to the scientist or the naturalist, was of little interest to the boys. The fact of the matter was that the gulls were here, here a hundred and fifty miles from the shore of the great lost continent, and the food-depot which had been placed there for their return journey seemed in danger of destruction. And if it was destroyed? The two boys looked at one another for a moment in silence, then without a word, moved slowly forward over the surface of the glacier, which was now blue, glaring ice, and now wind-swept, corrugated stretches of snow.

“We’ll know in a few hours,” said Ole at last.

“Yes, we’ll know,” said his companion quietly. Then they pushed on in silence.

“Look,” Rodger cried in dismay.

“A hundred of them!” Ole exclaimed, as he glanced before him. They had made their way over the trail to the next depot and now as they neared it, there had risen from above the place a hundred sea gulls, squawking and screaming as they scattered before their advance.

“If we only had a gun,” groaned Ole, “we’d make them pay dearly for this. They are not very good eating, but they’re a lot better than nothing.

They found matters quite as bad as they had feared. The entire supply of

food had been devoured by the birds, and some even hovered above them like great vultures, as if expecting the boys to die before their eyes and furnish them some further repast.

“Who would have thought of the sea gulls?” groaned Rodger. “There’s not another part of the world in which the caches unprotected on the snow would be safe from animals, but there’s not a land animal on this whole great continent, not so much as a mouse. And here come the gulls and rob us just as we are making the last laps of the journey.

* * *

Ole struggled forward, starving, half asleep, leading the way for his com-

panion, who fell again and again, only to be urged up and on again. Many hours had passed since they had discovered the last cache robbed. They had lost their way. They were starving. No food and yet they were but fifty miles from food and shelter. Could they make it? The question kept revolving itself through Ole's mind. But now he heard Rodger calling hoarsely.

"Ole," he shouted hoarsely. "I believe I see something off to the right of us!"

Ole paid little attention. What could there be in all this empty land that would be of assistance to them? The fog had lifted from the glacier and there might, indeed, be some barren

rocks showing in the distance, but one could not live on rocks.

“It looks like something sticking up out of the snow,” said Rodger. “I’m going over to see.”

“All right,” said Ole dreamily. “don’t go too far and don’t stay too long.”

Rodger had not gone far toward the strange object before he discovered it to be a part of a broken ski sticking up out of the snow. His heart bounded with hope. Other men beside themselves had been on this glacier. This cheered him. The place did not seem so lonely now. As he approached the spot he was sure he saw a mound half-buried in the snow. And as he came

near to it he could hardly breathe for his heart's thumping. He felt sure that here was a cache of food in boxes. If only it were not spoiled with age!

Instantly he was fumbling about in the snow. At last he dragged a box from its hiding and ripped it open with his bare hand. It was a box of malted milk in cans. It was sure to be fresh. With a great shout he began to call for his partner.

Ole heard his shout at first in a dream. He had fallen quite asleep. But at last he arose and stumbled toward his companion.

“Malted milk and chocolate and pemmican in tins, and other tinned meats; enough for us now, and for the journey

home,” sighed Ole, as he broke the last box open. “Who could have left it here?”

Rodger thought for a moment. He had read every book of Antarctic exploration in the library of their city.

“Amundson,” he said at last. “The cache is years old. But I’m mighty glad it’s here.”

The boys were soon feasting, and after that they lay down to sleep.

The remainder of the journey was made with ease and comfort. They found things as they had left them at the camp. There was no sign of the ocean’s ice breaking up. This greatly disappointed them.

As Ole stood alone by the beach that



As He Broke the Last Box Open

night and looked away at the tumbled mass of ice piles, he wondered for the hundredth time, whether they were to be compelled to live on this desolate continent for another year. Such a catastrophe seemed almost unthinkable.

Five months later Rodger sat gazing away at the distant mountains, which were being painted a rosy tint by the long, parallel rays of the midnight sun.

Rodger was at peace with the world and himself. He had experienced a wonderful winter; such a one as he did not hope soon again to know. A born explorer, he had ransacked his little corner of this strange continent to his

heart's content. Every empty sack and box at his command was filled with specimens. Green and pink diatoms, skins and skeletons of seal, sea-leopards, penguins and many types of birds, as well as a score of strange species of fishes had been stowed away to later enrich some zoological collection, while his collection of minerals included some really surprising discoveries. A yellow metal, having all the properties of gold, gleamed from a specimen broken from a granite cliff, and two small pebbles gave off the phosphorescent-like gleam which is the property of diamonds shown in the dark.

Little wonder, then, that he was pleased at the winter's work which had

been so strangely thrust upon him.

And yet, he was glad for another thing; glad they were going home. Home, the very word brought up a thousand pleasant recollections; some disturbing ones, too. Many, many times he had wondered how the whaling schooner had been able to pass the winter without the supplies which had so unfortunately gone astray—yet, he longed to be away.

Spring was in the air. Hundreds of penguins who had gone swimming and flopping their way north in the autumn were coming back, magalestrides, and snowy petrel, came in great numbers too. There was a break in the solid shore ice. He was seated at the edge of

this pool of black water now and watching the little Antarctic prawns, snapping their way like small crawfish through the water. All this spoke of the coming of spring; movement, hustle, bustle, noise, action. One longed to be away.

And they were going; he felt sure of that. The schooner had been assembled; that is, the part that had been left was. The engine was in place, the cabins, the wheel, the rudder, everything except the prow. There a great, dark hole yawned. The hull stood on a solid cake of ice, propped to right and left, and seeming like a plow without a plowshare.

Outside the new cabin on the beach,

was a tent, made of sails. They had been living in this tent for a week. Inside the cabin were strange doings. The gasoline stove with its huge heating drum had been shoved into one corner and kept going day and night. Ten seal oil lamps, improvised out of pieces of granite, ranged along the wall, had been kept burning too. In the center of the room and almost filling it, and towering to the ceiling was a strange triangular affair built of rough boards. In spite of the heat produced by the stove and seal oil lamps, the air was as humid within as the inside of a laundry. The windows thickly crusted with frost, admitted an uncertain glow of light.

Ever now and again Don would burst into the room, quickly slam the door to, examine the stove and the lamps, perhaps add a cup of oil here or drag up the rag wick there, thump the side of the strange bulk in the center of the room, then mutter as he turned toward the door:

“If it’s right! If it only is!”

* * *

As he sat by the side of the dark pool of water, Rodger’s attention was attracted by a great emperor penguin who had come coasting down the sloping hillside and had, quite unexpectedly, glided off the bank into the water. Not that the penguin does not find himself quite at home in the water;

he does, but in this case the pool was lined all round with an abrupt wall of ice which no penguin unassisted could scale.

Of all the creatures of the Antarctic, Rodger had found none half so fascinating as the penguin. His droll, manish ways, as he struts about on the ice, his fearless friendliness, his amusing antics give him a real personality which no other creature of any land possesses.

Although the great flock of them had migrated to warmer waters in autumn, five had elected to stay about the camp. Welcome enough they had been and well they had been fed. Rodger called them the "Five Gray Friars." He came to know them one from the other

by the peculiar markings. He noted now that this fellow who was making frantic efforts to escape from the pool was one of the five. More than this, he noted that the bird was in great peril. Deep in the bottom of that transparent pool he detected the stealthy movement of a gray mass; then the flash of white teeth.

“Sea leopard,” he whispered, moving over to the side on which the penguin was struggling to escape. “Old Gray Friar,” he whispered, addressing his friend, “if you let that fellow get a nip at you, you’re a gonner—”

Just as the boy put out a hand to assist him, the penguin disappeared.

“Gone,” he muttered. “Too late! He got him.”

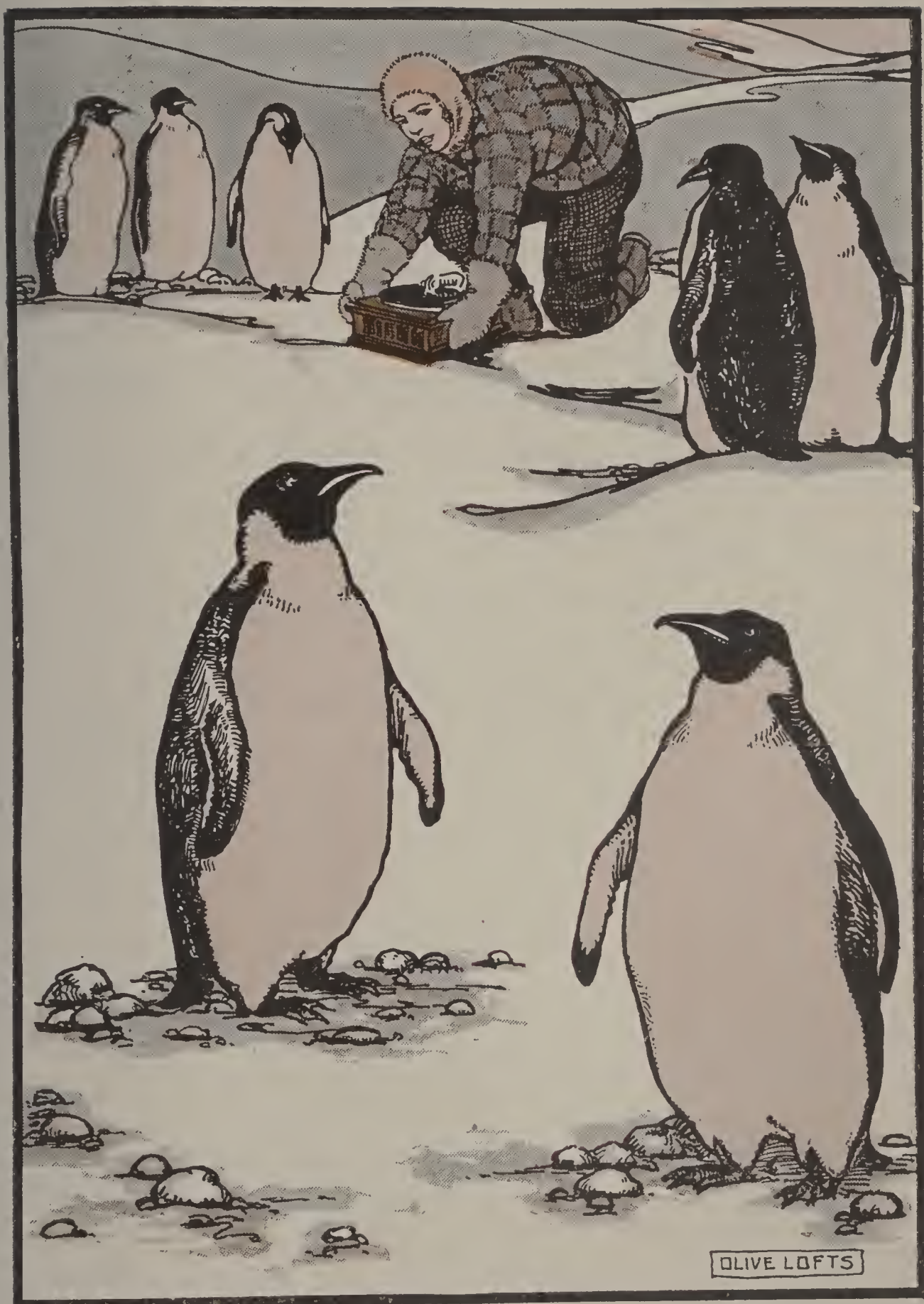
He was genuinely sorry. The Five Gray Friars had been great play fellows. With them he had coasted down hill; with them skated and with them had gone on long excursions. Once he had attempted to entertain them with martial music played on a phonograph. They had voted the show a failure and had done their best to wreck the instrument by beating it with the flipper.

That the sea leopard had captured the penguin, he did not once doubt, for the sea-leopard, a species of very large seal, is a cannibal of the first order. Living on warm-blooded meat, he

makes life hazardous for penguin, young sea-birds and even for seals of a smaller species. But suddenly he exclaimed, "There he is. He didn't get him!"

The penguin was now on the opposite side of the pool. Racing to his aid, Rodger bent over to give him a hand up, when suddenly there came a great rolling wave of the sea. Lifting the cake of ice on which the boy rested, it pitched him headforemost into the sea. He came up laughing, for he was a masterful swimmer and did not in the least fear the sea-leopard.

Having assisted the Gray Friar to mount a swaying cake of ice and hav-



OLIVE LOFTS

ing experienced again the thrill that comes from the feel of water against one's chest, he decided to stay in for a ten-minute swim.

Don, who had witnessed this little panorama from the slope above, sat down to watch and admire the graceful antics of his pal.

Suddenly his face turned deathly white.

"Rod! Rod!" he exclaimed. "Look out! Look out! A thrasher! A killer! A killer whale!"

Rodger, casting one glance downward into the depths, felt himself petrified with fear. Beneath him, turned half on his side, his double row of white

teeth gleaming hideously, was one of those beasts of South Polar seas which every being fears—a killer whale. The instant he regained his senses, Rodger dove, dove deep and strong. To go beneath the “killer” was his only chance.

In the meantime Don on shore had grasped a heavy whaling gun which lay against a boulder. It had been with the whaling schooner supplies and Rodger, that very morning, had charged it with a small bomb in the faint hope that he might get the skeleton of a “killer’s” head for his collection.

With straining eyes Don watched the pool. The crystal clearness of the

water gave him ample opportunity to observe every move of both boy and whale. For the moment, a shot was not to be thought of; it would too greatly imperil his comrade.



CHAPTER IX

Piloted by An Iceberg

The pool into which Rodger had fallen was long and narrow. Scarcely ten yards wide at any point, it stretched for a distance of some three hundred yards down the bay.

Having dived under the huge body of the whale, he swam for a short distance beneath the surface of the water to come up some ten yards from the

point where he had left it. Without pausing for a glance behind him, he began at once the Australian crawl, which carried him swiftly toward the far end of the pool. A muffled roar told him that Don had risked a shot. Whether the bomb had found its mark he could not tell, nor did he dare pause for a glance back.

To his consternation, he discovered, on nearing the far end of the pool that the wall of ice was much higher on this end than on the other.

"Three feet, and straight up," he groaned. "I—I'm afraid—but I must attempt it."

As he came within two yards of the ice-wall, he executed a flying-fish like

motion which lifted him quite out of the water and flung him against the ice. Instantly his hands gripped the slippery edge and clung there. With knees doubled under, feet treading water, every muscle straining, he attempted to throw himself upon the smooth upper surface of the ice.

Just as he realized that he must fail, he glanced back. For a second, wild desperation controlled him. The whale was all but upon him. And now he was calm again. Calling every muscle into play, he executed a skillful backward flip-flop, which threw him by the side of the whale and, for the moment, out of reach of his savage jaws.

With a strangely terrifying sucking

sound, the great creature plunged head foremost into the water. So great was the draw of the whirlpool created by his downward swoop, that the boy was all but drawn beneath the surface.

After a brief battle with the seething water, Rodger set out bravely for the other end of the pool. His strength was waning; he realized this with a sort of shudder. This must be his last race with death. He thought of Don and the whale gun! There were other charges for the gun beneath a flat rock nearby where the gun had stood. Did Don know this? Would he load the gun and fire again? And, if he did, would he have better success than on

the first trial? These were the questions which sped through his mind as first his right hand, then his left, shot far out above the water as if he were reaching for a firmer grip on life.

Don did know about the other charges. He had reloaded the whale-gun. He was now hovering on the very edge of the pool, waiting the prime opportunity for a sure shot. He realized that Rodger's strength was waning, that this shot must reach its mark if his good pal were to accompany him back to their home. And what would the journey mean without him? His eyes blurred at the very thought.

But now they were clear again. The

critical instant had arrived. Rodger was all but at the end of the pool; the whale a few laps behind.

Now the whale appeared to pause, like a tiger before a spring. With a steady eye Don took aim. There came a loud report; it was followed a second later by a muffled roar. Instantly the water was boiling, red with blood. The shot had reached its mark.

A moment later Don was hurrying his companion away to the tent for dry clothing.

“Whew—that—that was a—close—close one,” Rodger puffed.

“I say so,” answered Don.

“But say!” Rodger exclaimed, “you keep a watch on that pool. See if he

floats to the top. Get a harpoon and tie him to the ice if he does. I—I want that head of his for my collection.” Then he tore away at his water-soaked garments. “That was a corking shot of yours, that last one. A real pippin, I’d say!”

“It—it had to be,” mumbled Don. There was a suspicious huskiness in his voice. “I’ll just go down and see if he’s come to the top.”

“All right. Here’s hoping.”

A few moments later, as Rodger was drawing on his boots, he heard a joyous shout from off the ice that told him plainer than words that the wonderful head of the “killer” was to be added to his collection.

Two days later Don burst into the tent with the exclamation:

“Moisture’s gone from the cabin; frost has cleared from the windows!”

“Which means,” smiled Rodger, “that the great moment has arrived; that the momentous question is about to be answered.”

“We’ll have to tear the whole side out of the cabin,” said Ole, seizing an axe. “Can’t get ’er out any other way.”

There was soon to be heard a ripping and tearing of boards at the cabin built of the explorer’s lumber. In a very short time the entire side which faced the sea had been torn away.

There was still work to do. Again there came the screech of nails, the

crash of boards. This time it was the mysterious structure erected within the cabin that was coming down. As the work progressed, there came more and more into view a strange-looking affair, built entirely of cement. It was triangular in shape, and appearing to be solid, might be judged to be of considerable weight.

As the last board was ripped away, Don seized a hammer and tapped it lightly here and there.

“Seems O. K.,” he muttered.

He scanned it up and down. “No seams, either. Perfect job, I’d say. Turn her about to the light.”

The combined strength of the trio was needed to swing the affair to a posi-

tion where it rested with the sharp edge toward the light.

In this position it very much resembled the prow of a ship. And such, indeed, it was intended to be. They had cast it to replace the prow of their schooner. Don had conceived the idea on that day when he first discovered the cement. When his comrades had been skeptical he had pointed out to them the fact that during the war the entire hulks of ships had been made of cement and that these very ships had helped win the war.

“We can’t do any worse than fail,” he had urged.

So they had gone about it. No light task was this, freighting hundreds of

pounds of cement and great piles of lumber over the rough and uncertain trail which lay between them and the explorer's cabin. At times they had been overtaken by blizzards which came sweeping down from the south. Frozen noses, ears and fingers resulted. But they had persisted.

The problem of setting the cement once it was mixed and poured into the form had been a difficult one. Well they knew that it would not set unless it was kept at a temperature well above freezing and in a dry place. The building of the form within the cabin and keeping of the stove and seal-oil lamps had solved this problem.

And now there remained but to drag

this strange fake-prow up to their schooner, to prop it into position, then to bolt and stay it into place with bolts which Ole had laboriously forged and with hickory timbers taken from their supply.

They went at this task with a will and, ten days later, only a skilled ship-builder could have guessed that the Augusta C had a cement prow. Two coats of water-proof paint had all but obliterated the line of repair.

“And now,” breathed Don, giving a turn to the capstan which was attached to a distant ice-pan, “Off she comes.”

Slowly, gracefully, the craft followed the groove which they had cut for her in the ice, and, as she glided forward,

seemed to test the water as some child might who was wading in the edge of a pool.

“She stirs, she moves,
She seems to feel
A thrill of life
Along her keel,” chanted Rodger.

The next moment, with a mighty splash, she took to the water and floated there, graceful as a swan.

“And now,” said Don, “all that remains to do is a little calking here and there. Then give us clear sailing and we’ll away.”

It would be hard to describe the feeling of the three boys when, for the first time in ten months, they ate their mess

on deck. It had been a wonderful experience, this life in an unknown continent, yet each one of them longed with an inutterable longing to be away. Perils there were yet before them, enough, too, to cause them to think seriously of the immediate future. Outside the bay gigantic icebergs, vast ice-flows, wild storms awaited them. To all these they must give battle before reaching the sheltered harbor of Deception Bay.

* * *

Despite all their rosy dreams of being away at once, three weeks after her launching the schooner was still lying in the dark pool of water. A stubborn mass of shifting ice, three miles in

width, still blocked their passage to the open sea and bade fair to be blocking it still when the short summer was ended and winter came again sweeping down from the frozen south.

Utterly downhearted, Don had gone about the camp for days with scarcely a word to say to his companions.

Then there came a few hours of wild excitement; an iceberg had broken away from the glacier a half mile to the east of them. Having fallen upon a shelving bed of rock, it had capsized with a mighty splash which sent every fragment of sea-ice within five miles of it into the wildest sort of commotion.

As for the schooner, it was for two hours in the gravest danger of being

crushed by the fragments of ice which came rushing at it from every side. It was only by the most strenuous labor at guying dangerous cakes to the shore and prodding them to right and left of the schooner that the boys were able to save her.

When at last they were given time to breathe freely again they found themselves in a state of exhaustion.

Rodger and Ole stretched themselves out upon the deck for a rest. Not Don. He had discovered something which interested him; inspired within him a great hope.

Making his way to land he hurried along the shore to the foot of the glacier. There he climbed to a seat on

a jagged bit of rock and gazed away to sea.

For five solid hours he sat there. At times his eyes wandered from the surface of the ocean to rest upon the seamed walk of ice beside him. Now and again he glanced at his watch.

“Five miles, I’d say, in that many hours,” he murmured at last. “Means she’ll be clear in two hours. It’s a grand idea; if only—” again his eyes wandered to the surface of the glacier and this time rested on a particular spot where a deep crevice ran directly across the glacier, seemingly from bank to bank. After that he rose to hurry back to his companions.

It was a wild and wonderful scheme

he had to unfold to them as they sat about the table in the fore-castle.

“It sounds impossible enough to be interesting at least,” Rodger smiled good naturedly. “Don’t see any harm in trying it though. When’d you say you thought it might come off?”

“’Bout a week or ten days. Glacier’s moving some five feet or more a day. Depends, I suppose, partly on tides and storms. Safe for five days; then we’ll have to set a watch.”

When the five days were up the boys set a “pup” tent on the rock by the foot of the glacier and thereafter twenty-four hours a day they kept a sleepless vigil in this tent.

On the night of the sixth day, Ole came tearing down the slope, bearing under his arm the canvas of the tent.

“She—she-s off,” he stammered.

And even as he spoke there came a loud report as of a cannon, and the next instant the sea was set in wild commotion. A second berg had broken away from the glacier.

“Come on,” cried Don. “It’s now or never.”

If the first iceberg had caused them agonizing toil, this second one set every muscle, every fiber of their beings to aching; for they were striving, not alone to save the schooner from destruction, but to pole her, foot by foot,

fathom by fathom toward a certain spot in the sea; and that spot was not far from the base of the glacier.

The truth was that scarcely had this iceberg successfully launched out into the deep than an under-current like some monster hand had seized it and carried it slowly, but surely, in a circling course to the right and out to sea. It left behind it a narrow channel of back water, which was, for the time being, completely cleared of ice.

Don's idea was that if they could but reach this open channel before it closed they might be able to follow the berg to the open sea.

There was danger enough in the undertaking. Should they come too close

to the berg and should the berg split or capsize, their schooner might be instantly crushed. Should the berg, on the other hand, not reach open water, they would find themselves in the midst of a great floe with no possible means of escape.

“Well, that’s that,” breathed Don, as the schooner, with a joyous snort, shot out into the clear water of the channel.

Six anxious hours followed, hours which at times seemed to threaten instant destruction. But, at last, the steel blue castle of ice drifted through the last obstruction, and slowly, so slowly that never a wavelet was sent against the berg, the little schooner, seeming but some floating wild-fowl

beside the gigantic mass of ice, made her way around it and into the open sea.

A hundred miles the little gasoline schooner chugged merrily over the deep, green sea. Here and there a crabbing seal rose to stare at them. A wandering snowy petrel paused in mid air to make a strange noise at them. Once the huge black bulk of a killer-whale rose above the sea. Had this monster cared to look, he would have seen the grinning jaws of one of his own kind riding above the boat's prow. Rodger had mounted it there like a pirate's death's head.

A fog which had hung low on the horizon lifted. The breeze freshened.

The sun, close to the horizon, began to tip the wave points red, pink and gold. At that moment, Rodger, who was on duty at the wheel, noted two things; a storm was coming up out of the west. A great, rolling mass of black clouds hung there, apparently motionless, yet ever increasing in volume. Then, too, there appeared before him a number of indistinct bulks in the distance. Had he been on land, he might have thought them a chain of freight cars standing disconnected on a track. But, being at sea, he could for a time only ponder their meaning. They appeared to lie across his path, to block his way. This troubled him.

As he came nearer, the cloud to the

west grew darker, more lowering. He wondered if the schooner could weather a great storm.

To the east the sun shone more brightly.

As he came still nearer the chain of strange objects, they changed color. Those to the west, against the storm cloud became black, glistening things, like cubes of gunmetal. Those to the east against the sun became shining masses of white hot steel. It was a wonderful sight.

But what was to be the end of it all? These were icebergs, hundreds of them, which had broken off from some great continental ice-shelf. Would

they effectively block the way, driving them, step by step, back to the floes?

Slowly he turned the wheel, first this way, then that. Slowly, surely, he neared the center of the great procession. Slowly, but surely, the storm cloud advanced.

Now he discovered broad breaks in the procession of icebergs. If he could but reach them before the storm arrived all would be well; he would pass unharmed and the ice would serve as a shelter from the storm.

Now they were five miles away, now three, now two, now one. And as the storm queen appeared to lift her dark skirts for a wild on-rush, they found

themselves between towering walls of ice.

The sound of the engine grew into a deafening roar as it was echoed and re-echoed by those icy precipices.

And now, now they had passed the danger-point. They were safe on the other side.

A half mile from the icebergs the engine ceased its throbbing. Here they would await the coming of the storm. And it came. With wild on-rushes of wind, with torrents of rain it tore the ocean into foam, then beat it into silence. But, sheltered in the lea of a giant berg, the little schooner rocked peacefully on until the storm had passed, until the sun came out and the

bergs once ore were fired with all the glorious hues of a rainbow and a sunset.

“Some day,” said Rodger, as he stood beside Don, who was at the wheel, “I’m going back there. I’ll pass those gates of shining gunmetal and flaming molten steel and I’ll go back to that unknown continent. I’ll go to the South Pole. I’ll explore that smoking mountain far to the south. If there’s gold, I’ll assay it and, if diamonds, as there are in all other lands of the Southern Hemisphere, I’ll gather them in bushel baskets. Perhaps,” he laughed, “I shall discover the Great Carbunkle, or a diamond as big as a ship.”

“Some day,” Don laughed back whole-

heartedly, "I'm going to tuck my feet under a table about which are gathered smiling women and laughing children, as well as jolly men; where you can see flowers blooming, and trees waving their branches; where you can hear the grass grow. That's life for me."

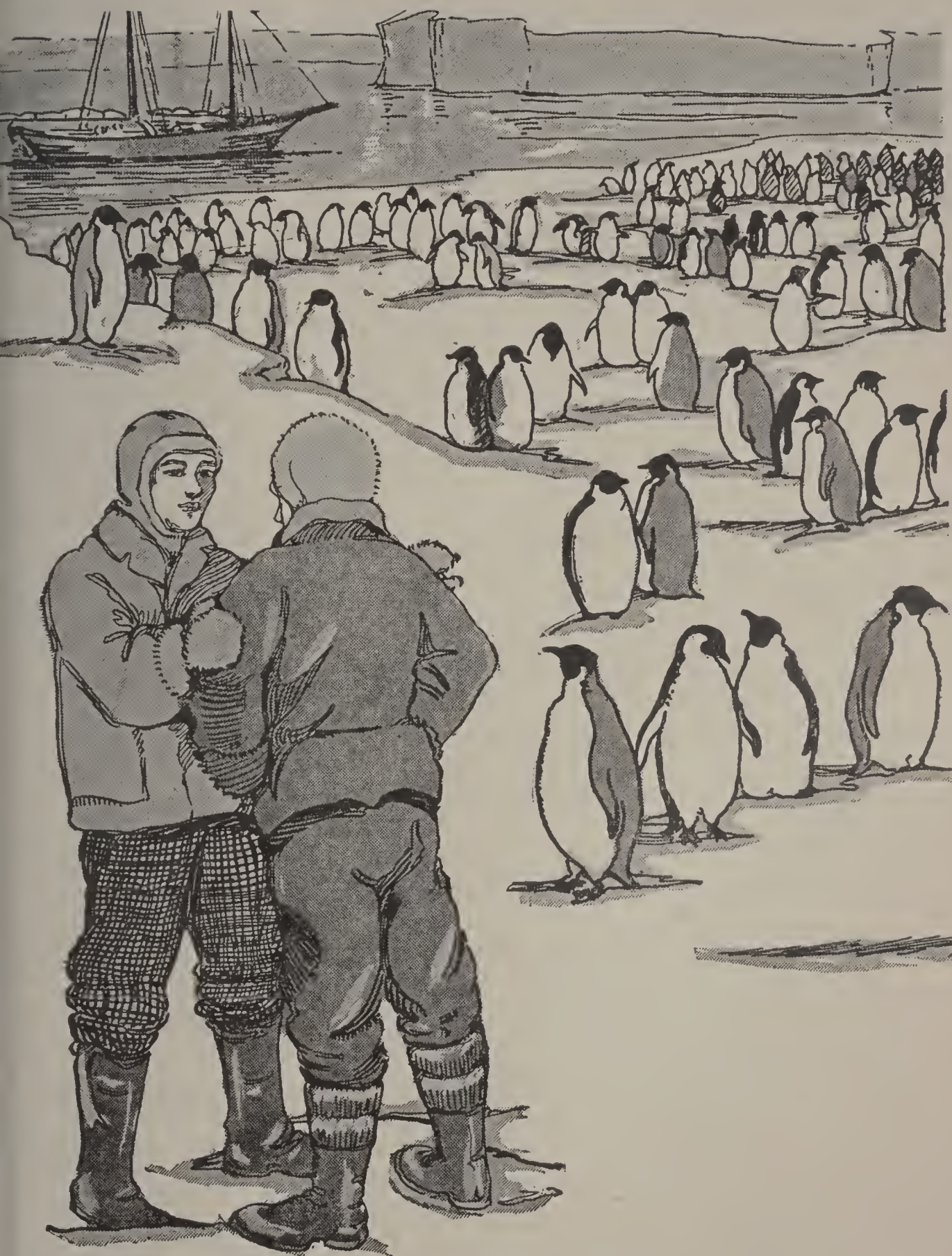
In due time the schooner came popping into the harbor at Deception Island. The boys were received as those who have returned from the dead. Many and loud were the exclamations over their story of strange adventure.

In turn, they were informed that a strange whaler had put in at the harbor just before the freeze-up and that she had carried on board food enough for

all; so there had been no suffering for lack of supplies.

“I am glad,” said Rodger soberly, “for I should not like to have anyone suffer for my mistakes. But since it has been as it is, I am glad, too, that we were shanghaied by an ice floe, for we have seen such things as few have been privileged to see and had experiences such as may never come to us again.”

When the boys had rested for a time at the whaling station, they thought once more of home. Then, too, there came to them the old desire to hunt out the island on which the mysterious Pendulum Cove was located and to make one determined search for the old



"I am glad," said Rodger, soberly

sailor's gold mine. After much discussion, it was decided that, since it was still early in the season, they should take a course which must bring them into the neighborhood of the island of gold, and which, at the same time, would take them many miles nearer home. It was under these conditions then that they once more set sail, little dreaming how many days would pass before their schooner cleared the wharfs of Punta Arenas.

CHAPTER X

Pendulum Cove

A storm was rising. The boys in their little schooner were skirting the shore of a rocky island. Here and there great glaciers dipped their giant white points into the sea, while in the ocean, three monster icebergs, but recently formed, threatened to block their way. There was something strangely familiar about the general

form of the island, and finally Don ventured to state that he believed this was the old sailor's island.

"If it is," said Rodger, "there should be a narrow opening on this side, the entrance to an inland bay of volcanic origin; and it will be well for us if we find it, for there's going to be a rough sea."

He wrinkled his brow as he looked away at the racing clouds. It was plain that Don shared his opinion.

"See! There it is!" exclaimed Rodger, pointing away shoreward. And there, indeed, was a narrow opening in the rocky shore.

Soon they were passing through a narrow channel scarcely wide enough

for a good-sized whaler to enter, but quite ample for their slight craft.

Once they were inside, their eyes opened wide with admiration and wonder. Here in the center of the island lay an inland bay, just as the old sailor had described it. The water was so smooth that it mirrored the snowy mountains that towered above it. Here and there a snowy petrel skimmed across its surface, or a penguin rose from his fishing. Here and there on the shore came the scream of a great white gull or the shrill call of a cormorant. And from every shore there arose the steam and vapors of the hot springs of which the old man had spoken. This, and the circular form

of the bay, told plainly that the island was volcanic in origin. The boys asked themselves with a little tremble whether it might not still be active. They were somewhat reassured, however, when they discovered on the right bank a few buildings which had been erected some time past by sealers. These they found deserted.

The boys did not linger long to examine the buildings. There was nothing there for them. They consulted their maps and set out at once across the bay to what must at one time have been Pendulum Cove. Since they were storm-bound, they were determined to make the best possible use of the time. They found, just as the old sailor had

said, that the cove had disappeared. There was now only a low-lying valley, indicating that at some earlier date there might have been a cove there which was later filled with the wash from the shore, or with volcanic ash. Here, at the present time, they were unable even to find an anchoring for their schooner. The bed of the bay was of solid rock. They had counted on all this, however. The sun, shining all day and all night had thawed the earth to a depth of four or five feet. In Alaska, rich mines had been discovered by digging to a lesser depth than this. Why not here?

It was very apparent that the little gulch in which they were planning to

work had at one time been the bed of a glacier. Some unseen power had removed this glacier and filled its bed in with gravel, rocks and sand. What the unseen power had been was not hard to guess.

The island was not destitute of glaciers, however. On every side they came gleaming down to the water's edge like giant white serpents. The schooner had been anchored at the mouth of the bay. They never attempted to return to it by land; to have done so would have been a hard and dangerous task.

What they meant to do was to sink shafts here and there through the earth to the bed-rock and to discover,

if possible, whether there were still other gold nuggets in the sand which had been the bed of the stream.

To do this required days of arduous toil, but at last one day Don, who was working at the bottom of a shaft, gave a little shout of joy and looking up at his companions said:

“Catch!”

In another instant Rodger held in his hand a hard, heavy yellow bit of shining metal. Then how their hopes mounted! Were they to become men of great fortunes by this re-discovery of gold in the desert lands of the south? What might not yet be before them!

But as they drifted on along the rocky bottom of the former glacier's

bed they found themselves disappointed. True, every pan brought them a little gold, and now and again there was a sizable nugget. But they were not getting rich fast. They were earning great wages, but that was all. Each day, however, they assured themselves they would come upon the "pocket" where gold might be panned in basins full. So they worked, scarcely counting the days that were passing.

"Say!" exclaimed Don one morning. "It's the twentieth of January. We have only ten more days before we must begin our journey home; unless we are to spend another winter in the Antarctic."

"I guess we don't want to do that,"

Rodger frowned. "It looks as if we'd have to plan to get out of here within a week and leave our fortune for some other time or to someone else. It's a shame, too!"

But Don was hardly listening to him. He was looking away at a geyser-like spring of hot water which they had named "Old Faithful." It seemed to him as he looked, that its volume of steam had doubled and was increasing even as he watched it.

"Rodger," he exclaimed in awe-struck tone. "Look at Old Faithful. Do you think—"

But Rodger had jumped to his feet with a startled cry. He was looking toward the side of the bay on which

their schooner lay. There, where but faint jets of steam had been seen before, were great columns of smoke-like steam, three of them, any one of which was far greater in magnitude than Old Faithful had ever been.

Don was long in going to sleep that night. The increase in volcanic activities about the cove filled him with a thousand fears. What if the island should suddenly become all afire, or a scalding caldron of steam? What if their schooner should be buried by sudden eruptions or steamed into a mass of warped and twisted timbers? What chance would there be, even if they succeeded in escaping to safer surfaces of the island, of their ever getting back

to their native land. They were hundreds of miles from any whaling station. Whale ships did not enter this harbor; the entrance was too narrow, the whole aspect of the place too forbidding. They could live on penguin meat for a time; perhaps always. A correct balance of lean and fat meat would sustain the life of a white man indefinitely; Stefansson, during his sojourn in Arctic regions, had proved that. But what joy could there be in clinging to life, if they were to be Robinson Crusoes in such a desolate land?

So his mind ran on, until at last sleep claimed him and carried him away to the land of dreams.

Some hours later Don awoke with a stifling sensation. Looking out into the night, he felt that the world was burning up. All about him there rose columns of steam towering toward the sky, reflecting the lurid light of fires that seemed to have burst forth from beneath the very sea.

Don awoke with a start. Ole was shaken into wakefulness, and once they were fully aroused to the danger they were in, they hastily drew on clothing and made their way to the shore of the bay where their dory lay. From that side the wind blew and they were at once compelled to abandon the thought of reaching their schooner by water. Should they attempt it, they were

likely to be boiled alive by the steam that swept across the bay.

“The gold!” Don exclaimed, as they made their way back toward the upper slope where the glaciers lay. “Have you got the gold?”

“Tied in a sack slung across my shoulder,” panted Rodger.

“If it’s too heavy, give me part,” said Don, quickening his steps as he felt the hot steam entering his lungs.

For a moment they paused at the steep side of a great glacier. How they wished they had heeded the warning of Old Faithful and the three new steam-jets of the evening before. But they had wanted so much to have one

more try at the "pocket," which they felt sure must not be far away now.

"We've got to try the glacier now!" exclaimed Rodger. "It's our only chance!"

"I know it," said Don, producing a small rope. "Take hold of this both of you and we'll help one another as much as we can."

Slowly they made the ascent of the steep, icy slope. Already the ice was slippery with steam. Here they were obliged to cut steps in the solid ice with their knives, and here they skirted narrow ledges of rock jutting out from the glacier. Finally they reached the summit and heaved a sigh of relief. But this relief lasted for but a moment.

The entire upper surface of the glacier seemed to be torn and seamed with crevices. It was even now creaking and grinding as if it would tear itself in bits and crush them beneath an avalanche of fragments. Slowly, painfully, with many a slip, they made their way along its edge, hoping against hope, to find a place where it might be crossed.

“And if we ever get across this one, we have still three others!” groaned Don, tightening his grip on the rope, as Rodger came perilously near a slide into some unknown depths below.

“I wonder what it’s like down where the schooner is?” said Rodger, getting a fresh start.

“The wind’s from that direction. I believe we can make it if—”

He did not finish the sentence. There was a sickening slide, and Don felt the small rope burn through his fingers.

Listening, he heard a swash as Rodger fell in the water thirty feet below. “Are you hurt?” he shouted down.

For a moment there was no answer, then came back:

“No, but it’s awful wet down here. Give me a hand, you two, and let me see if I can climb out.”

The two boys on the ice-cliff above pulled on the rope, but Rodger fell back time and again. The ice was so smooth, he could get no footing.

In the meantime, the steam from the thawing island of ice was driving his companions to despair.

“Cut notches as you go and make sure of them. Hurry!” Don cried. “The steam is getting awful!”

He stretched himself down on the ice and listened to the work of Rodger as he cut his way to liberty. At last, with a great effort, they dragged him to the surface and a few moments later discovered a bridge of snow that took them safely across the glacier. Then followed a second glacier which was not quite so badly seamed.

They were making fair progress and their spirits were rising when Don gave a new cry of alarm:

“Look!” he said, pointing to the end of the third glacier that jutted down to the water. There a fire had sprung right from the rocks and the sputtering of the ice as it came in contact with the fire was like the booming of a hundred cannons. They could not hear one another speak for the intonations.

“Come on!” shouted Rodger, dodging low to escape the steam.

Slowly they made their way up the glacier to a point where they were safe from this new peril. Then they began again the slow and painful process of crossing the glacier which, like the first, was full of dangerous crevices.

Once they had crossed this, there remained but the clambering down the

steep side of the glacier to the slender bit of beach which they knew would lead them to their schooner.

But what of the schooner? This was the question which their anxious minds were constantly asking. If steam enshrouded her; if fresh volcanic fires had shut out their way, they were lost; for who knew how great would become the violence of this volcanic action which had so strangely broken out anew on this mysterious isle?

Anxiously they made their way down the steep side of the glacier until, little by little, they had lessened the distance to a few feet, when with wildly beating hearts they slid the balance of the way,

and their feet touched the rough gravel beach.

Hastening around the point they came in sight of the cove where their schooner lay.

“There she is!” exclaimed Rodger, almost dropping to his knees in his excitement and joy. “And she’s safe!”

“And we can reach her!” exclaimed Don.

But in another instant there came the question, “How?” They no longer had their dory. That was on the steam-heated shore far away. The schooner was anchored away from shore. The air might be superheated with steam, but the Antarctic water was chilled with ice.

"Can you swim it?" asked Don.

"I believe I can make it," said Rodger, throwing off his coat.

In an instant he was out of his heavy clothing, and was plunging in the water and swimming strongly toward the schooner. It was a hard pull. As Don watched him, he had a moment to look away at the terrible and wonderful fight of the elements. Fire and water, cold and heat battled for possession of the strange and terrible island of Antarctic seas. But his thoughts were arrested by a shout from Rodger, who had regained the ship. He was already starting the engine. Soon he was pop-popping toward the shore at a point where there was a rocky cove making a deep

beach water. His companions hurried on board.

An hour later the little schooner lay away a half mile from the island, while its masters sat on the deck and watched the most wonderful spectacle they had ever witnessed. From this distance they could get a new and interesting view of the natural phenomena which were occurring on the island. Great icebergs, which had recently been broken from the glacier, turned over and over in the sea as the heat-waves struck them. They seemed to fairly rocket through the water, while now and again the end of a glacier would explode with the sound of a great howitzer. These, in turn, reflected the

red glow of the fire-pits which burned here and there on the rocky surface of the island.

The water all about them swarmed with wild things driven from their homes. Seals and sea-lions darted through the waters, penguins skimmed along on its surface, while gulls and snowy petrel shot over its surface. And here and there a great black whale lifted an inquiring head above the rippling waves.

“Well,” said Don at last. “We’re well out of that. I’m all for going home.”

He turned toward the wheel. Then he gave an ejaculation of surprise. Something was pulling at the belt.

“Why! It’s the gold!” he exclaimed.
“I’d forgotten we had it!”

“How much is there of it?” asked Rodger.

By the light of the flaming island they weighed the gold they had taken from it, and each calculated in his own way what it would secure for him in their own quiet home-land. It would not do wonders, but it would give them a start in life.

“Well,” said Don finally. “I’m glad we came, but for myself, I’m one who will never go back.”

“And I’m another!” exclaimed Ole.

“Think!” said Rodger. “Wouldn’t the world go mad if we were to tell them where we found this gold!”

“Wouldn’t they? But are we going to tell them?” asked Don thoughtfully.

Five days later the little party of young adventurers, having met with no further mishap, steered their schooner into their home harbor. It was a wildly excited group of town boys who escorted them home and devoutly thankful families they returned to.

The gold quartz found on the Antarctic Continent proved to be of too low a grade to be of any real value. The supposed diamonds were mere glistening pebbles of no real value. The gold taken from Pendulum Cove fully paid for all the supplies used on the trip and the sale of Rodger’s collection to a museum netted a neat sum, which

he, very generously, shared with his two companions. So the boys found that the year had not been an unprofitable one from the standpoint of finances and they had gained a wealth of experience which would endure throughout their lives.



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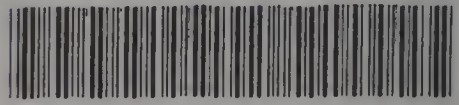
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